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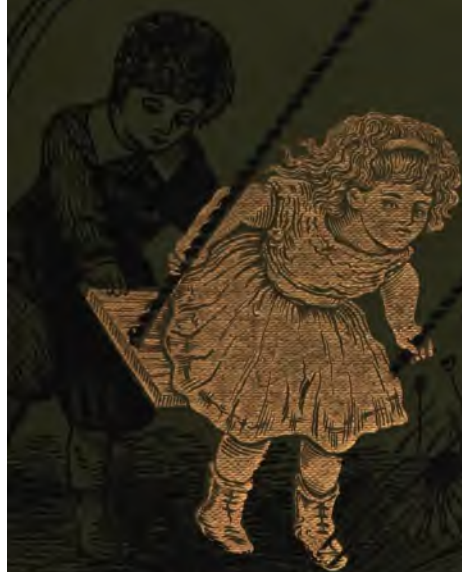
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LITTLE READY CRY



FROM THE FRENCH

BY

C. H. JONES

2



LITTLE READY CRY;

OR,

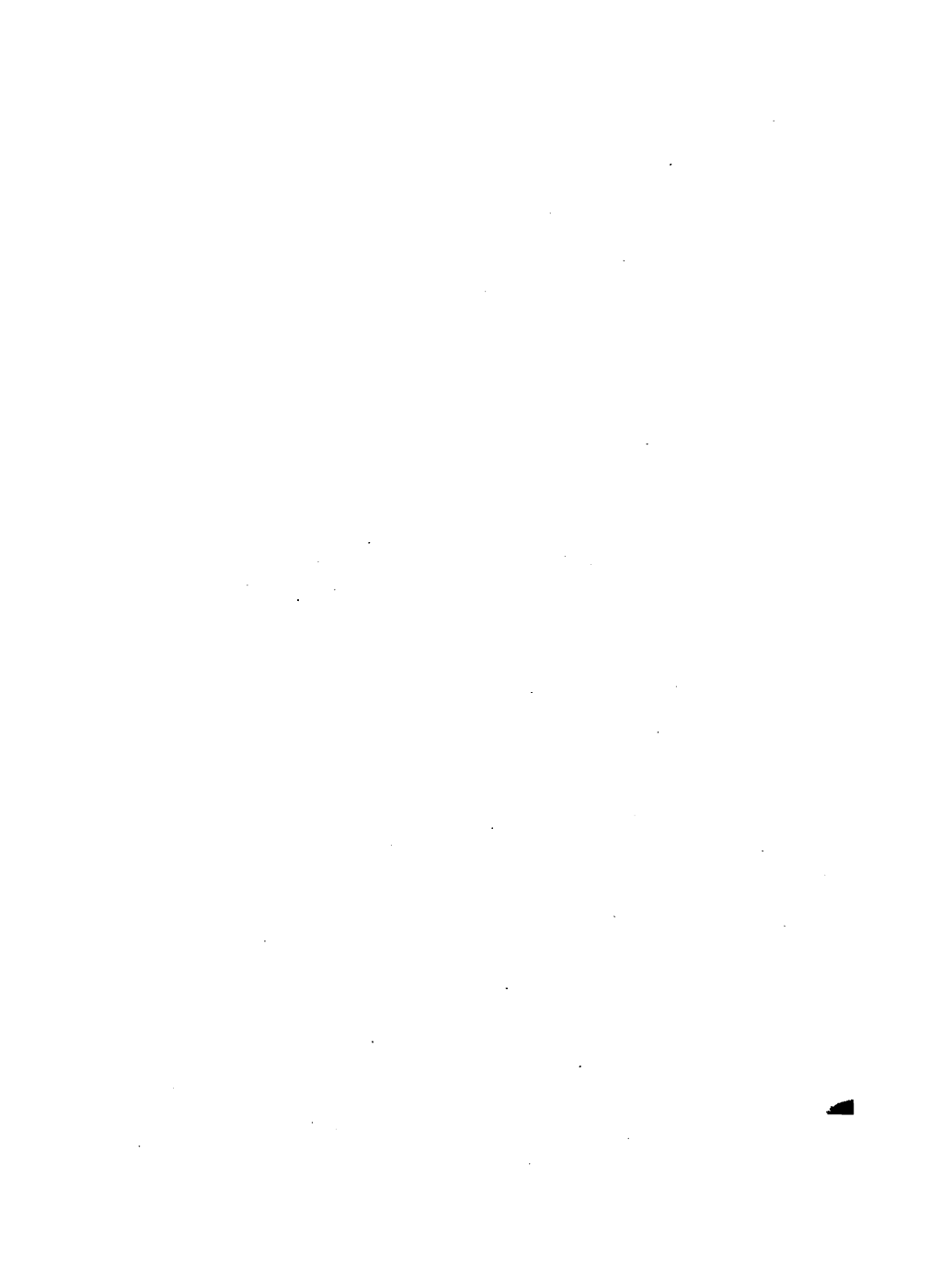
The Sorrows of Six Years Old.

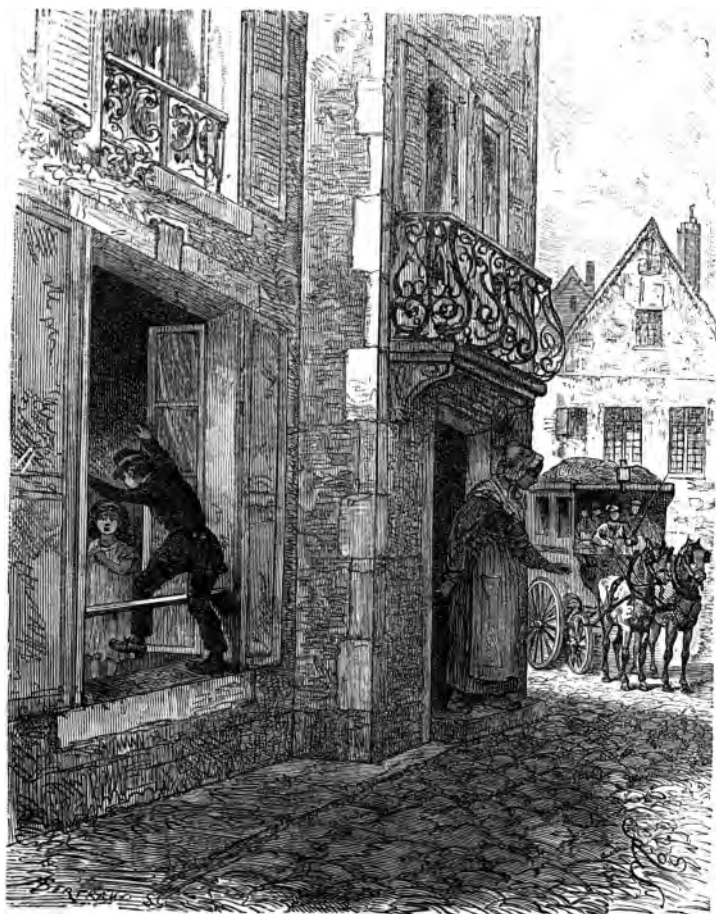
CHAPTER I.

HOW CHOUCYOU CAME BY HER NAME.

CHOUCYOU is my heroine's name, a very funny name, is it not? I dare say you think you are going to have a story about a dog, or a cat, or a pony, or even perhaps a donkey, but this is not the case. Chouchou is a little rosy-







LITTLE RABBIT CRY

OR,

The Sighs of the Heart.

FROM THE FRENCH OF MADAME DE LA FAY.

C. A. JONES

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LITTLE READY CRY;

OR,

The Sorrows of Six Years Old.

FROM THE FRENCH OF MADAME COLOMB,

BY

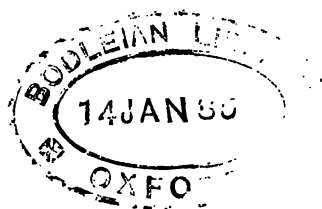
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LITTLE READY CRY;

OR,

The Sorrows of Six Years Old.

CHAPTER I.

HOW CHOUCYOU CAME BY HER NAME.

CHOUCYOU is my heroine's name, a very funny name, is it not? I dare say you think you are going to have a story about a dog, or a cat, or a pony, or even perhaps a donkey, but this is not the case. Chouchou is a little rosy-

cheeked, blue-eyed French girl of six years old, with bright golden hair hanging in two long and somewhat heavy plaits down her back ; but these heavy plaits are of some use, they make Chouchou hold up her little head, and not stoop as a great many little girls do. No one ever thinks of saying to her, " Do hold yourself up, my dear," for she is as upright as a dart.

She is very quick too at all games, at battle-door and shuttlecock, and ball, and croquet ; she runs as fast as a young hare, and she can roll a hoop better than any of her little companions, and only give her a skipping-rope and the way she skips is something wonderful.

Of course you have guessed that Chouchou is not this little girl's real name, it is a name she gave herself when she first began to talk ; what she meant by it is a secret that will never be divulged. Her real name is Catherine, and except that both names begin with the letter C, they certainly do not bear the smallest resemblance to each other.

It is not a French name either, it is quite as



much English as French ; if it is anything at all I think it must be Chinese. Chouchou as a baby may have had some vague ideas about China.

She is never called anything else, she would hardly answer to the name of Catherine, and would think that any one who so addressed her was very angry with her.

Although she is a little French girl and lives across the sea, and you would have to go to France in a steamer if you wanted to see her, you could get there very much sooner than you could to a great many places in England.

Chouchou's home is at Dunkirk, which is a very short distance from Calais, and from Dover to Calais is only about an hour and a half's voyage in a steamer, and you are in sight of the white cliffs of old England, until you reach the shores of France.

Dunkirk is on the sea, and Chouchou lives there with her father and mother, and her brother George, who is five years older than she is. Their house is in a nice large garden, and some-

times the children's grandfather and grandmother come from Lille to stay there, and of course do their very best to spoil George and Chouchou.

There is another visitor who comes to stay with Monsieur and Madame Despaigne, (Despaigne is Chouchou's surname,) every summer, that is their nephew Roland, the children's cousin.

He is a bright clever boy of eleven or twelve years old, and he lives in Paris, and goes to a great public school ; but he is not very strong, and the doctor having recommended sea air for him, his parents send him off to his uncle and aunt at Dunkirk to spend the summer holidays.

The day upon which our story begins is the day on which Roland is expected. Monsieur Despaigne has gone to Lille to meet him, and preparations are being made for his reception.

A second little white bed, with sheets smelling sweetly of lavender, has been put into George's room. Fidelia, the cook (an old servant who

prefers doing all the work of the house herself to having any one to help her) has put more raisins than usual into the cake, for she is very fond of Master Roland, although he is sometimes rather a trouble. George has got out all his treasures, and tried to repair anything that is broken, and Chouchou runs all over the house on every one's messages, and spends a good deal of time in putting a new red leather collar with little brass bells round the cat's neck.

The cat is of course a French cat, and his name is a French name, *Blancminet*. *Minet* is a term of endearment for a cat, and *blanc* is white, *Blancminet* therefore means white pussy.

And whilst she was making all these preparations to receive Roland, little Chouchou kept saying to herself, "Oh, how glad I am that he is coming to-day." Then when the hands of the clock pointed to six o'clock, her excitement rose to its height. The train was due at twenty minutes to six; there would be Roland's box to find, and then the omnibus would have to be loaded, then it took quite

twenty minutes to get from the station to Monsieur Despaigne's house ; that would bring it to ten minutes past six, then it was quite possible other passengers might have to be put down on the road, and of course that would take up a little more time, but in any case it must arrive soon.

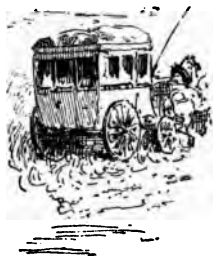
Chouchou stood before the clock, looking at the slow movement of the minute hand, and listening with all her ears for the sound of a carriage in the road. She ran to the window, and then back to the clock several times, and at last the chimes from the old church tower rang out a quarter past six.

"He ought to be here ; oh, that horrid omnibus," cried Chouchou, with tears in her eyes, which she wiped away with the back of her sleeve. "Ah ! there it is at last ; suppose he has not come." But there he is, he is beckoning to one of the porters, the omnibus is stopping, some one is getting out,—but some one is jumping in at the window ! Roland in his impatience has jumped out of the slow

dawdling vehicle, and there he is in the drawing-room.

Fidelia, who is watching for him upstairs and sees him running along at full speed, goes down to open the door for him, and looks up and down the road anxiously ; then she hears his merry laugh in the house, and cannot tell how he has got in.

And now up comes the omnibus with Roland's trunk, and Monsieur Despaigne gets out of it, and dinner is ready, and everybody is very hungry.





CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT CHOUCYOU.

NOW I must tell you a little more about Chouchou, for at present you only know that she can run and trundle a hoop, and skip, and play croquet, and of course little girls have a great deal more than this to do in the world ; and how they do it, and how they get on, depends very much upon themselves, and their own behaviour. Now Chouchou had a great many good qualities, but her life was not as happy as it ought to have been, and that was quite her

own fault—Chouchou at six years old made her own miseries—you will soon see how this was.

She was a very affectionate little maiden, and she had a very tender loving little heart. She loved her father, and mother, and George, and Roland, and Fidelia, and she loved a great many people besides, and a great many things too ; birds, and cats, and dogs ; everything in fact that came in her way. Fidelia used to say of her, that her heart was made of India-rubber, and could be stretched in all directions.

Then she was a very truthful little girl, she had never told a story in all her little life, and what is more, she had never tried to hide the truth, even to save herself from blame.

And now about poor Chouchou's faults. "The child is a great deal too sensitive," Fidelia would say, wiping away the ever ready tears from the bright blue eyes, when she found Chouchou, as she very often did find her, crying her heart out over a dead sparrow, or a lame dog, or a cat with one eye ; or, because the children

next door had been fighting, or the carpenter at the corner of the road had scolded his apprentice for being lazy.

Chouchou cried over all the misfortunes, great and small, that happened to her acquaintances ; what she had begun to do when there was some real reason for it, she now did as a habit, and she had a tear ready for every occasion.

If the rain prevented her going for a walk to which she had looked forward, she cried ; if she filled her pen too full of ink, and in consequence made a large blot upon her copybook, she watered the blot with her tears ; if she broke a plate or a saucer belonging to her little tea-service, she went through the same performance ; as though tears would mend china : and if by any chance she thought that one of her little companions liked some one else better than her, oh ! then her despair was at its height, she was quite inconsolable.

George had one day called her " Little Tear-in-eye," and the name became rather a joke in the family, but it only added to poor Chouchou's

woes, and George, who was really a very good-natured boy, left it off. Of course, if we are very fond of any one, we like that person to love us in return, it is but natural, is it not? But it does not do to be going from one person to another, and saying half-a-dozen times a day to each of them, "Do you love me?" It was rather a bore to Chouchou's father when he was reading, and to her mother when she was busy, and to George when he was learning his lessons, and to Fidelia when she was cooking, to be expected to express their affection for Chouchou. This kind of thing tires those we love, and who love us—love ought to trust, and not to doubt.

So the result of all this was, that Chouchou with her loving little heart, and her truthfulness and her many virtues, was not a good-tempered little girl.

When everything pleased her, and when she was not thwarted, she was everything that was charming, she would laugh, and jump, and sing, and be as merry as a bird; she learnt her lessons

without any trouble, and her scales seemed to play of themselves, the little fingers rolled along so quickly and so evenly.

But if Blancminet came home with his ear torn, after one of his many wanderings on the roofs of the neighbouring houses, or if one of the young chickens died through some unforeseen accident, or if Nero the dog, chased by George, broke a flower in the garden, Chouchou was put out for the whole day ; nothing went right.

To be put out for the day, is a thing that often happens both to big people, and to little people, unless they in some way control themselves.

Something occurs early in the morning to vex them, and everything else goes wrong. I have known children spend a most miserable day, a day of tears and punishments, and all kinds of vexations, simply perhaps because they did not quite like what they had for breakfast.

They grumbled all breakfast-time ; they were in a bad temper still, when they went to their lessons, and of course found them very difficult, and were longer over them than usual ; when play

time came they were still cross, and did not recover themselves before bed time.

I am sorry to say that this was often the case with Chouchou, not that she was greedy enough to fret over her breakfast, but never mind what the cause of vexation was, the result was the same ; Chouchou's way of being "put out" tired every one around her.

Another thing about her was, that she was very anxious to succeed in everything she did : well, of course, as far as her lessons were concerned, that was all right ; but if her doll's hair would not curl as she wished it to curl, poor Chouchou was unhappy, and if she was unfortunate at any game, she could not get over it.

There was one little expression she was in the habit of using when anything went wrong with her ; it was an expression she had once heard from a very fidgety old gentleman who had lost his train because he had forgotten to buy a strap for his portmanteau until the last minute : " These things never happen to any one but me."

Chouchou was mistaken, all the little boys and girls in Dunkirk, and indeed all over the world, had quite as many vexations—some of them a great many more, to bear than she had, only there was just this difference between them and our little heroine, they knew how to bear them better.





CHAPTER III.

BLANCMINET'S COLLAR.

DINNER was over, most ample justice had been done to Fidelia's pastry, and indeed to everything that was on the table, and the children were very anxious to run off to have a good game in the garden.

Chouchou seized hold of Roland's hand and took entire possession of him, not taking the smallest notice of George, who only shrugged his shoulders and laughed, and said to himself, "New brooms sweep clean." Happily the boy

was not given to trouble himself because he did not receive as much attention as his neighbours.

Roland was of course taken everywhere, he was made to climb up to the pigeon-house, and to take Chouchou up with him to see the nest where two little pigeons had lately been hatched. They were very ugly little things, with their little red swollen bodies, with what looked like short black and white stalks, which some day would become feathers, growing out of them, and without either tails or wings, and the round eyes not yet opened. They did not look in the least like pigeons, and Roland was imprudent enough to say so, whereupon Chouchou, very much concerned at his want of taste, descended the ladder with tears in her eyes.

That was the beginning of things going wrong.

The hen had taken her chickens to bed like a sensible mother as she was, knowing that early hours are good for all little chicks. This was of course very vexatious, she certainly

ought to have allowed them to stay up a little later on the day of Roland's arrival.

And then there was Blancminet in his red collar and bells, put on on purpose to greet her cousin,—he had entirely disappeared. Chouchou in her anger said he must have done it on purpose to vex her. She called loudly, but no Blancminet came.

"I don't think the poor thing is happy," said Fidelia, "I think his collar hurts him."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Chouchou; "his head can't get out of it; he can't take it off *this* time. Blancminet! Blancminet!" still no answer from Blancminet.

"Never mind," said Roland, "do leave the cat alone, let us go and have some fun. Is the swing still in the old place?"

"Yes," answered George.

"Then come along and have a swing; here, George, take hold of one of Chouchou's arms, and I'll take the other, and we'll make her run as fast as we do. One, two, three, and away!"

Off they went; Chouchou's little feet did not

touch the ground, the boys carried her along so delightfully. When they reached the swing she begged for another turn round the garden, then another and another.

"It is so nice," she cried, "just like flying. Oh, how happy the birds must be to have wings, and fly where they like!"

At last George and Roland were fairly tired out, and threw themselves down upon the grass to rest for a few minutes.

Now for the swing. Chouchou of course, as a young lady, must have the first turn, then Roland, then George; then they each stood up whilst Chouchou had another swing; it was all very delightful, and Chouchou had forgotten for an instant that Roland did not admire the young pigeons.

George and Chouchou were in the swing now, Roland was pushing it, and looking about him to see what changes had taken place since last summer. He saw that the walnut tree was a great deal larger, and that geraniums had been planted round the cistern, instead of the mig-





nonette that used to be there, and that the tool-house was covered with new tiles. He asked himself whether he liked these bright new red tiles better than the old broken ones, where green moss and grey lichen used to peep out between the cracks and crevices, and blades of grass swayed gently to and fro in the summer breeze. All of a sudden his meditations on new tiles and old tiles were put a stop to, by the appearance of a cat on the roof of the tool-house.

"Cat! seize him," cried the boy, as he always did when he and his companions met a cat in the streets of Paris, on their way to or from school.

Cats are not fond of walking in the Paris streets, any more than they are in the London ones, they prefer the quiet of the roofs, so it was somewhat of a novelty to the schoolboys to meet one, and they never failed to try and set a dog on poor puss.

There was a dog on the spot ready to obey Roland's orders. Nero with one bound was at

the top of the steps which led to the loft, with another he was on the roof of the tool-house, barking with all his might.

“ Meow, meow, meow,” cried poor puss, trying to get away at full speed.

“ Nero, Nero, down, sir!” shouted Chouchou in a tone of agony, for she had recognised Blancminet.

She was very angry with Nero, and a little angry with Roland, but he did not know Blancminet, and thought it was a strange cat who had intruded into the garden, in a way cats have of intruding everywhere.

But that Nero should chase his little mistress's pet in such a savage manner, that he should try to hurt the companion that slept with him all through the winter on the hearth-rug, was an offence for which Chouchou would never forgive him.

Nero stopped in his headlong career directly he reached the tiles ; he had seen his mistake, and he stood there wagging his tail in a most amicable manner, as though he wished to say to

Blancminet, "Forgive me, my old friend, I did not know that it was you, it is all the fault of this stupid schoolboy who tried to set me against the cat of the house."

But unfortunately poor Blancminet did not hear all that Nero wished to say to him, his one wish was to get away as fast as he could, his conscience reproached him for having run off when Chouchou called him; and when he heard those fearful words "Cat! seize him," he ran off like a mad thing, neither looking before nor behind, to see who his enemy was.

He jumped into the walnut tree, and the next minute—oh, horror! Chouchou saw something white hanging from one of the branches.

"Stop, stop," she cried, and Roland at once stopped the swing. Then Chouchou ran to the walnut tree, and burst into a passion of tears and sobs. "Oh, my little cat, my dear little cat!" she cried, "see, Roland, he is hanging by his collar, and he will die; oh, my poor little Blancminet!"

"Yes, he really is hanged," murmured Roland,

“what a funny thing for a cat to be hanged, I never saw such a sight before ; wait a minute, Chouchou, I am going to unhook him, he’s not dead, cats have nine lives.”

Another moment and Roland, who had learnt gymnastics in Paris, had climbed the walnut tree splendidly, he sprang on to the branch at the end of which poor puss was hanging, and stretched out his hand. Blancminet did not understand that the hand was a friendly hand held out to save him, and that he ought to behave politely, he struck out his claw, and gave the boy a sharp scratch.

Roland drew back his hand, but he was very sorry for Chouchou’s tears, and he got a little further on to the branch, and seized the cat by the skin of his neck. Blancminet in spite of his ingratitude was saved ! Roland tried to calm him by stroking him gently, and Chouchou carried him to the kitchen to see whether he had sufficiently recovered to be able to swallow a little milk.

She took him on her knee, and held the

saucer to his mouth. Poor Blancminet could not swallow very well ; his throat was painful, and he still felt very ill. Chouchou of course thought he was going to die, and began to cry again ; she cried all the more when her brother and Fidelia tried to comfort her, and at last even good-natured George was provoked beyond endurance.

"After all it is all your own fault," he said, "mother told you to take the collar to the saddler's to have it made larger, and you said it was better as it was, for it would be impossible for Blancminet to lose it. Of course if it had been larger he could have got it over his head, and saved himself, instead of hanging as he did from the walnut tree."

"Come, come, Mademoiselle Chouchou," continued Fidelia, who was dressing Roland's wounds, "it is not worth making all this fuss about a cat, when there are so many Christians in the world who have so much suffering to bear ; you will be very happy if you have no greater sorrow than this, in the course of your life."

Chouchou looked up and saw that Roland's

hand was bleeding ; of course this was another subject for tears, they flowed copiously for the rest of the evening. Chouchou cried whilst she was being undressed, she cried when she said her prayers, she even cried in her sleep.

George and Roland were half sorry for her, half angry with her.

“ I say, Roland, do the little girls in Paris cry at everything as Chouchou does ? ” said George.

And Roland answered, “ No, certainly not,” and added in an under tone, “ and a good thing too.”





CHAPTER IV.

AT MARKET.

NIGHT always brings some comfort with it ; if our troubles are real, we forget them for several hours ; if they are imaginary, sleep takes them all away, does not leave a single trace of them by the time morning comes.

When Chouchou awoke from a very sound sleep the day after Roland's arrival, she was as gay as a young lamb, neither remembering her cousin's want of politeness in not admiring the

little pigeons, nor even the great danger which had threatened poor Blancminet.

When she did, after a minute or two, think of the events of the evening before, they did not make her less cheerful.

Fidelia went to dress her, and Blancminet accompanied her into his little mistress' room purring and putting up his back in the most contented fashion ; then he jumped upon Chouchou's bed, and tried by a great display of affection, to show her that he was not in the least angry with her for having put a collar which was so much too tight for him round his poor little neck.

George and Roland were already in the garden when Chouchou, looking very bright and happy, ran down stairs and joined them.

"I only hope the old hen and her chickens are out this morning," she said, "give me some corn, please, Fidelia."

Fidelia tied a large blue apron round Chouchou's neck, and then she took up the corners, which she knotted behind her, and so made a

kind of pocket for the corn, then she opened the fowl-house and called out "Cocotte ! cot cot cot cot cot cotcode."

The language was peculiar, but Cocotte, a pretty white hen with a crest as red as coral, understood it perfectly ; she began to cackle softly, to gather her little ones round her, and they all ran up to Chouchou, and Cocotte looked up with her bright eyes into the little girl's face, as much as to say, "Well, I thought you had something to give us."

"Look at her, Roland, isn't she pretty?" said the delighted Chouchou, "and are not the little chickens lovely ? she is so fond of them, and looks after them so well ; there are twelve of them, you can count them all, they are every one of them there ; come, eat, my pretty ones, eat the nice corn," and the little girl threw a handful of food upon the ground.

Cocotte did not eat a single grain of it ; she took it up in her beak, and let it rest there, and then let it fall again before her little chickens ; this was to show them how to eat.

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They understood the lesson, and it was very comical to see them try to take up the corn as their mother had done, but a good many of them failed in their attempts, and one or two evidently more clever than the rest, took up the corn the others had dropped, and ran away with it.

“Oh, what fun,” cried Roland, “let me have some corn, Chouchou, let me feed them . . . there is one trying to rob the others, I never saw anything half so funny. They are not a bit like their mother, they are so fat and round, and covered with yellow down, which makes them look like canaries. Chouchou, will they have grown before the end of the holidays?”

Chouchou was excessively proud at being questioned by Roland, on a subject upon which she knew something, and he knew nothing.

She began to explain to him very gravely that chickens grew much more quickly than boys and girls, and that in a week Cocotte's little ones would be ever so big, and in a fortnight they would be bigger still, and she mea-

sured on her arm the size they would be before the end of the holidays.

George, who was of a practical turn of mind, laughed at her very much.

"Nonsense," he said, "how can Roland understand such a measure as that? let us take him to see the yellow hen's chickens, they are three weeks old, and he will see how big they are."

"Yes," answered Chouchou, "let us go into the yard; we don't let the yellow hen come near Cocotte, for her little ones are so small and the others are so large they would fight them. There they are, look at them, one has a crest already, and some of them have tails and wings, there is a poor little black one which was hatched last of all, and it does not seem to grow a bit, but its mother takes great care of it, and won't let its brothers and sisters beat it. It is a gentle little thing, and will eat out of your hand, if you give it some corn you will see how nicely it takes it up with its little beak."

Roland was very much amused at this visit

to the fowls, it was a new pleasure to him, one not to be found in Paris, and he was very much interested, and not in the least bit tired of Chouchou's chatter when Fidelia's voice summoned the children to breakfast.

In they rushed like three mad things.

"Oh, what a large cake," said Roland, gazing with longing eyes at the steaming bread cake in the centre of the breakfast table, "but shall we ever be able to eat it all?"

"You know, Monsieur Roland, people always eat when they come to Dunkirk, the air is so fine; besides, although I say it that shouldn't, because I made it, I am sure it is a very good cake."

It certainly was, a quarter of an hour afterwards Fidelia took away the empty plate upon which the cake had rested. Roland said he had eaten like a wolf.

"Take care of yourselves and be good children," said Monsieur Despaigne, taking up his hat to go to his office.

"What are we going to do to-day, mother,"

said Chouchou, "Roland wants to see the sea, will you take us to the beach?"

"Not this morning, my child, we must leave it until the afternoon, and then we can stay as long as we like, but this morning I have a great deal to do. I must go to the market; who will come with me?"

"Hurrah for the market!" shouted Roland, "I never get a chance of going in Paris, I will carry your basket, aunt."

"Thanks, my boy, but the market people will send home all I buy, take a little basket for yourself, in case you feel inclined to make any purchases."

So each of the children armed themselves with a basket, and off they started for the market.

Chouchou, it must be confessed, was not best pleased with the arrangement, she had wanted to go to the sands, and she was taken to the market; and it was not half as nice.

Her mother had said that they should go to the beach in the afternoon, but it might rain, or some horrid visitors might come. It would

have been all right if they could have gone in the morning, but now it was all wrong, and there was a cross expression on the little face which had been so bright and sunny when Chouchou was feeding Cocotte and her chickens.

The market at Dunkirk was held in a large square, and most children thought it great fun to be allowed to go there,—Chouchou would have liked it above all things, only you see she would have preferred doing something else.

George and Roland were amused with everything they saw ; with the country people who had come from miles away, with their carts or their donkeys, with the mountains of cabbages and carrots, with the ducks and the chickens in their baskets covered over with net-work, with a stray rabbit who had run away, and was being chased across the market-place ; with the sweet flowers and the tempting fruit—in fact Roland announced in loud tones, that he should like to come to market every day.

At last they went to the fish market, Roland having in his basket some splendid plums, which

were to be eaten on the beach in the afternoon. The fishermen were late that morning, and just as Madame Despaigne got to the stall where she generally dealt, the fishwife's son arrived also, carrying a great basket of fish quite alive.

Chouchou was pleased for the first time since she had been in the market, and began to get very excited over the sweet little blue and silver fish, which she said looked at her so piteously, as though they would ask her to save their lives.

They were too small to cook, Charles, the young fisherman, said, and as Mademoiselle Chouchou thought them so pretty, would she like to have them in her little basket ?

Of course Chouchou was only too grateful to Charles, and in another minute the little fish were lying in some soft green moss which Chouchou had put into her basket before she left home.

Charles thought that she would have them fried, and have a doll's feast. There were three little fish, one for each of the children, so it would be all right.

But Chouchou herself had no such intention ;

she ran off as fast as her little legs would carry her, and in another three minutes Fidelia was alarmed by a violent ringing at the hall bell.

“What is it, Mademoiselle Chouchou ? is anything the matter ?”

“Yes, no, yes, water at once for my little live fish.”

“But the fish came out of the sea, they will not live in fresh water ; I had very much better cook them for you ; I will serve them with some fried parsley on your little dishes.”

“Fried parsley !” cried Chouchou, “my dear, dear little fish ! naughty, bad Fidelia,” and Chouchou began to sob violently.

Madame Despaigne came home to find her crying as if her heart would break.

Fidelia smiled when her mistress asked her to explain the cause of Chouchou’s grief ; Chouchou herself could not speak.

“Give me some water in a basin, Fidelia ; Mademoiselle Chouchou had better learn a lesson for herself, she always thinks she knows what is best to be done.”

The basin was brought, the little fish were put into it, and for a time appeared quite happy, swimming, and diving, and doing all that could be expected of little fish.

Chouchou was triumphant, she shut the door so that Blancminet, who had a particular weakness for fish, should not come in, she knew *he* would not have scrupled to eat them uncooked, and without fried parsley. Then she went up stairs to take off her hat, and she dressed her favourite doll, and combed its hair, and thought no more about the fish, until she went down stairs to the early dinner.

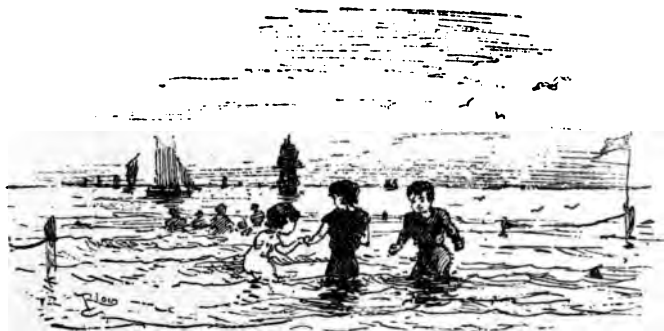
Monsieur Despaigne came in to his luncheon, and Chouchou cried : " Father, father, you must come and see the sweet little fishes that Charles gave me ; Fidelia said that they would not live in fresh water, but it is not true, they like it very much, and they are so happy ;" and whilst she was speaking, she dragged her father to the sideboard where the basin had been placed, and mounted a chair so that she too might have a peep at the " dear little things."

Alas ! two lay quite dead at the bottom of the basin and the other was floating languidly on the surface of the water ; a second more, and that one too went down to its unfortunate companions.

Chouchou began to scream violently. " I told you so," said Fidelia, taking the basin away.

This was but poor consolation ; all through luncheon time the little girl's tears ran down her cheeks, and at last she was told that she must go out of the room, which she did, sobbing still. Roland who was sitting opposite the window saw Blancminet basking in the sunshine, and smacking his lips with an air of great satisfaction ; he had eaten the three little fish without any frying, or any parsley.





CHAPTER V.

ON THE SANDS.

AN hour afterwards George and Roland went to look for Chouchou, to tell her that they really were going down to the beach, and that her mother said she might come too.

They found her sitting in the tool-house looking into vacancy, and occasionally giving a little sob, or a deep sigh. The boys were really very sorry for her, but they took no notice of her grief, and caught hold of her hands

and dragged her towards the house, telling her what fun they intended having on the sands.

Chouchou was in a great measure consoled, and put on her hat, and tried to smile and to be pleasant, and even helped Fidelia to pack up the basket of cakes and fruit, which they were to carry to the beach, and have a regular feast when they got there. They walked merrily on, and arrived at the sea in about half an hour. Madame Despaigne sat upon her camp-stool, and took out her work, and left the children to run about and amuse themselves as they pleased.

It was early, and there were not many children on the beach, only a few very tiny ones were amusing themselves making sand pies with their little spades. Chouchou only a very short time before had been very fond of making sand pies, but now that she had her brother and her cousin to play with, she considered it far too babyish an amusement.

George thought it would be great fun to dig a great hole in the sand, a little distance from

the sea, and then when the hole was dug to make a canal to join it to the water, and by degrees as the tide rose the canal would empty itself into the hole.

Roland said that would be a good game enough, but he had thought of a better one.

Instead of a hole, why not make a castle surrounded by a moat, and put Chouchou into it? She would be a princess shut up there by a wicked knight. George was to be the wicked knight, Roland would be a good wandering knight who would come to save the princess; they would have a great fight, and whilst they were fighting, the tide would come up by means of the canal into the ditch, and the princess would be in great danger surrounded by water in a lonely island. Then Roland would kill the wicked knight and go to the princess's rescue.

Chouchou thought this excessively clever, and said so, and Roland explained that boys who went to a great college in Paris must naturally have many more ideas in their head, than boys educated at the college at Dunkirk

could have. George did not answer, but whilst the boys were building the castle, he kept on boasting of his talents as an engineer, and tried to prove to Roland that boys at the Paris college could not possibly learn to build a sand wall, or to sink a moat, or make a beautiful straight canal. And he rather sneered when Roland's work fell down, which happened several times ; of course he was not as used to making sand buildings as George was.

But in spite of the good opinion which each had of his own cleverness, the boys did not quarrel, and were capital friends through it all.

When the castle was high enough, Roland lifted Chouchou into it, and at that moment a great wave dashed into the shore and filled the canal with water.

"Now then, George," screamed Roland, "now is our time," and he made a trumpet of his hands and sounded a call to single combat.

The two champions began to fight, Chouchou watching them anxiously from her castle, and seeing one after the other fall upon the sand,



entreated them to be careful and not to hurt themselves.

At last another great wave came up and filled the moat, and the princess was on an island.

Roland ought of course to have rescued her, but George did not like being beaten so soon, and he wanted also to show that he was the stronger of the two, so he pushed his cousin on one side, and laughed when he saw him rolling in the sand, and then whilst he was getting up, he jumped upon the island, took Chouchou in his arms, and ran off with her, crying, "I am taking away my prisoner. I am going to hide her in another of my castles."

Roland ran after him, and soon caught him up, for of course he could not get on very fast with Chouchou in his arms ; the princess herself was struggling violently, she was not at all pleased, this was not the way the game ought to have ended, and the wicked knight told a story when he said that he was going to hide her in another castle ; where was that castle ?

"Wait a bit, give me time to build it; come on, Roland, and let us begin at once."

Roland thought the idea a good one, but Chouchou had had enough of being in prison, and she walked away trying to look very dignified.

"Is she angry?" asked Roland.

"I think she is, she is quite silly enough to imagine that I have done you an injury by carrying her off, instead of leaving it to you to do."

"Well, girls have feelings, and no mistake, but Chouchou did not go on like this last year."

"No, she was not quite as bad, I think she gets worse every day, sometimes there is no telling how to take her, the smallest word sets her off crying; but there is mother calling us, the tide is well up now, and we can have a good swim; can you swim, Roland?"

"I should think I could, indeed; I have been to the swimming school every day for a long time."

A few minutes more and the whole party

came out of their respective bathing machines and met in the water. Chouchou had on a little black bathing dress trimmed with red braid, exactly like her mother's, and George and Roland were dressed in blue and white sailors' costume. There were a great many other children in the water, and they all danced rounds, and had swimming matches, and all kinds of fun, and Roland gave Chouchou her first lesson in swimming.

It is needless to remark that when the children got back to the sands, the provision basket was opened, and was very soon empty.





CHAPTER VI.

CROQUET.

THEY had just finished the last cake when two little boys and a little girl ran up to them.

"Oh! George and Chouchou, we are so glad you are here," they cried, "will you come and play with us?"

"Yes," answered Chouchou, "if Roland may come too."

"Of course he may, it will be all the better, six is a much better number than five."

"What for?" asked George.

“Why, for a game of croquet,” answered the little girl, “our aunt has sent us such a beautiful box from Paris.”

“A game of croquet,” repeated Chouchou, dancing for joy, “oh, I do like it so much, can you play, Roland?”

“Rather,” answered Roland, with an air of superiority, “wait and see.”

Paul, and Robert, and their little sister Clara were delighted at the idea of having a young gentleman from Paris to play with them, who knew all about the game; and Chouchou asked that she might be on Roland's side, that he might help her to get through the hoops; of course she was very anxious to win.

There was a little discussion as there always must be before a game begins, and then the sticks were fixed in the sand and the hoops placed, and the game began.

Chouchou, and Roland, and Robert, the younger of the little brothers, were on one side, and Paul, and George, and Clara on the other. Paul was a good player, and so was George,

the latter did not like croqueting Chouchou's ball, but somehow it always seemed to be in his way, and of course for the honour of his side he was obliged to make use of it.

Chouchou was angry, but she dared not show her anger to her brother, who she knew would only have laughed at her, so she turned it all upon poor little Clara, who played after her.

They had to pass through the same hoop.

"Now then blue—Chouchou," shouted Roland.

Chouchou took her mallet, and tried to hit Clara's red ball ; but she missed her stroke, and Clara, instead of being sent away herself, croqueted poor blue to a very long distance, and then passed through three hoops. Chouchou began to look miserable, she was left far behind all the others, Roland saw her lip quiver, and felt sorry for her, and instead of passing through a hoop himself, he went back to the blue ball, and put it into position. But this was all he could do, and he could not prevent Paul, who played before Chouchou, from sending her away



from her hoop again. Paul sent blue near red, Clara's ball.

"Oh, Paul," exclaimed the little girl, "you have sent blue so near to me, she is sure to croquet me."

"Yes, I see I played badly," answered Paul, "but never mind, she missed you just now, and I dare say she will miss you again."

"You think I shall miss her, do you, Master Paul?" cried Chouchou, in a passion, "I can play just as well as you can if I like, I can tell you."

Paul burst out laughing, and taking off his straw hat made Chouchou a low bow.

"Well let us see if you will like, Mademoiselle Chouchou."

"I will not let you call me Chouchou, only my friends call me that, and you are not my friend."

Chouchou had lost all control over herself, she turned away and tried to hit the red ball; but her hand trembled so, that she missed it, and instead of hitting the ball, she hit her own foot, which did not improve her temper.

Then Clara's turn came again, and she again

made use of blue, and got through several more hoops. Poor Chouchou was further behind than ever, and of course her side lost, and all through her fault. Robert did not scruple to tell her so, and even good-natured Roland could not help remarking that she was somewhat of a drag.

Paul was very sorry for her, she was such a little girl, he said to himself, as he saw her walk away trying to hide her tears ; then he went up and talked in a whisper to George and Roland, and they all three looked very knowing, and called out in chorus,

“Chouchou, Chouchou, make haste, we have time for another game!”

“We must have our revenge,” added Roland and Robert, “they can’t refuse to give it us.”

Chouchou was not anxious to play again, but as her side wanted their revenge, there was no choice left her in the matter. So she came back slowly, and tried to look pleased, and even said, “Thank you, Paul,” when the boy handed her her mallet.

The blue ball led off, and Chouchou tried to do her very best, and passed through the two first hoops.

"Bravo, Chouchou," cried Paul, and the little girl, pleased with her success, did not of course object to be called Chouchou.

All went on well for some time, and at one time the blue ball was ahead of all the others, and Chouchou was triumphant. Then some one sent George's ball very near her.

Chouchou trembled, her brother's turn came before hers, and of course he would send her away. Not a bit of it; George played as though he did not see blue so temptingly near him. Chouchou jumped for joy, and thought what a stupid fellow he was, but she did not speak.

The next minute Roland, instead of going through his own hoop, went to try and help Chouchou through hers.

"You are not playing well, Roland," she said, "I could have got through quite well, and see now how far back you are."

"All right, I am going near Robert, so that he may help me on, we shall soon catch you up ; we are sure to win this time, the others are far behind us."

Chouchou looked at the others to see if they minded being so far back, but they all seemed quite happy, and little Clara was biting her lips hard, as if she wanted to prevent herself from laughing. Chouchou could not understand the reason of this, and watched each player very attentively.

Paul's turn came next, and he missed his hoop in the most stupid fashion ; but Clara and George did not seem in the least bit put out with him.

Then George missed Robert's ball, certainly the other side did not in the least know how to play.

Then came Chouchou's turn again ; she managed to get dangerously near her old enemy the red ball, and of course Clara would be sure to catch her and send her away, there was such a little distance between them, not more than

the length of Chouchou's little hand, but Clara too missed the blue ball.

"Oh, she must have done it on purpose!" said Chouchou, a faint suspicion of the truth dawning upon her mind.

Clara tried to make some excuse for her stupidity, but utterly failed, like an honest little girl, who is in the habit of telling the truth.

Then Chouchou all in a minute understood what it all meant; her own side had but one idea, that of helping her through the hoops, and the other side played badly on purpose, so that she might have her revenge.

"It was too bad, it was humiliating," Chouchou said to herself; "they had all treated her as though she were a little baby, they had despised her, and wished to deceive her."

She burst out into one of her most violent fits of sobbing, and she told her brother, and her cousin, and her little friends, that she would never forgive them, never, and every one was very glad when Madame Despaigne said it was quite time to go home.

She sent Chouchou to her room, after talking to her very gently and lovingly, but the silly little maiden would not listen to reason, every one had been unkind to her, every one had ill-treated her, she was the most miserable little girl in all the world ! Her mother did not contradict her, but only told her that she hoped to see her in her right senses in the morning.

Chouchou knelt down and said her evening prayers, and asked God to forgive her and make her a good girl. She knew she had been very naughty, and given way to very bad temper, but through it all there was the feeling that she had been hardly used by the others, that no child in all the world, certainly in all Dunkirk, was half as unhappy as she was ; and so you see although she was a very truthful little girl, her prayers were not quite honest and sincere, for she tried to excuse herself at the expense of others.

The best thing if we are tempted to do wrong, by what we think to be the fault of those about us, is just very humbly to confess our own sin,



and leave the rest in God's Hands, He will judge us wisely and mercifully, and if we must think about others at all, let it only be in the way of praying for them.

The light of the summer moon fell that night upon a little rosy-cheeked girl lying in the most comfortable of little beds, in a bright pretty room with signs of loving, tender care all about her, and this little girl was—according to her own account—a most unhappy little maiden.

We will not pity her, however, for pity should not be wasted, and Chouchou's unhappiness was certainly of her own making.





CHAPTER VII.

THE AQUARIUM.

ROLAND had seen as he passed some of the china shops in Paris, some great glass cases filled with water, where red fish swam about, in company with little china dolls, and ducks, and geese,—china ducks and geese, of course. There were stones and pebbles too, intended to represent rocks, and altogether these “aquariums” were very pretty things, at least some people must have thought so, judging by

the crowds that used to assemble round the doors of the shops where they were displayed.

Roland himself did not care much about them, he thought the red fish rather stupid, and the dolls, and ducks, and geese extremely childish, but his kind heart was really very sorry for Chouchou's unhappiness, and he began to think whether it would not be possible to collect some little fish, and even crabs, and prawns, and shrimps, and put them into one of these glass cases, and give it to his little cousin for her very own.

He had read in the Boy's Own Book, how these aquariums were made, but he did not remember much about it ; he was quite sure however that one of those glasses which he had seen placed over the melons in his uncle's garden was one of the things named as possible to be used, and there were several of these in the hot-house which had been placed over the melon seeds in the spring, and were no longer wanted. He went and asked his aunt if he might have one of them, and when she said, " Yes, certainly,"

he betook himself to the tool-house, and chose the glass which he thought looked the clearest and best ; it was too late to do anything more that night, so he went to bed to dream about his aquarium.

“What in the world is the matter with you, Roland? you seem to have lost your tongue,” said George when the boys were in their room.

“No, there’s nothing the matter, only I want to make an aquarium for Chouchou! I think it would please her, and make her happy.”

“An aquarium! what awful fun! but how can you do it? do you know the way?”

“I think I do; I asked aunt to let me have one of the melon glasses, and she said ‘yes,’ we must turn it upside down, and make a stand for it of some kind of stone covered with moss, to make it look pretty, and we ought to try to make something grow there—ferns or something like that.”

“All right,” answered George, “mustard seed would be splendid, it grows in two days; then we could get some of those little ferns and

grasses that grow on the walls, they will look so pretty."

"Yes, won't they? but I say, George, how shall we make the stand?"

"Oh, that's easy enough; we will make a rock with stones, and stick some shells about it, but oh, Blancminet,—I forgot all about him."

"What *has* Blancminet to do with the aquarium?"

"A great deal, I can tell you, he loves fish, and he is a capital fisherman! don't you think that it will be easy enough for him to jump on the edge of the glass, and then to put in his paw and take out a fish? one fish each time the paw goes into the water, and he would have eaten them all in a quarter of an hour."

"Oh, nonsense; they would get out of his way, and go down to the bottom of the glass."

"No, they wouldn't, they are much too stupid, they would be frightened, and swim about like idiots, and Blancminet would fish them out: we must manage a cover for the glass."

"But then the fish would not have any air,

and the water would get bad . . . wait a minute though, what has become of the old fire-guard which used to be put before the grate to prevent Chouchou falling into it, when she was a baby ?”

“ Oh, what fun, that’s it of course, it is in the loft, a good deal broken, mother will let us have it, it is of no use to any one ; now good night, Roland, I am very sleepy, I must say my prayers, and get into bed, and we’ll get up very early in the morning, and make the stand for the aquarium.”

The chimes had not rung out five o’clock when George opened his eyes to see the bright August sun streaming into the room.

“ Hullo, Roland,” he cried, “ make haste, it’s getting late, I’m sure, Chouchou will be down before we’ve done a thing, if we don’t look out.”

“ I expect she’ll be just as early as we are,” answered Roland, rubbing his eyes, and giving himself a good stretch, “ you know she has been up quite as soon as we have these last two mornings.”

“ Oh yes, but once, or even twice is not every day, and she does not generally get up so early, **Fidelia** does not go to her room until seven o’clock, unless she asks it as a particular favour, and she was too cross last night to ask anything.”

“ So much the better then, let’s make haste.”

In another quarter of an hour the boys were in the garden, ready to begin their work.

“ Can you dig, Roland ?” said George.

“ Of course I can ; and now let’s see where we had better build the aquarium, we must not get too much into the sun, or the fish will die ; here is a nice sheltered place, just underneath this wall.”

“ Now,” said George, “let us begin to dig a hole for a foundation, here’s a spade.”

The hole was dug, Roland filled the wheelbarrow with some stones, which lay in a heap in a corner behind the tool-house, then with some earth and water they proceeded to make some mortar.

“ Have you a trowel ?” asked Roland, “ masons always have trowels you know.”

"I brought a little shovel out of the kitchen." - 1.

"Oh! I say, won't Fidelia make a fuss?"

"Never mind, we'll wash it when we have ^{we} done with it; see how splendidly it mixes the ^{ne} mortar."

"Yes, it's capital; now let us have a song, ⁸ good workmen always sing at their work."

They began to sing as loudly as they possibly ^y could.

"Hush, stop," said Roland, looking frightened, ¹ "we shall rouse Chouchou, and she will be out ¹ here in five minutes."

"Oh yes, rather, I mean oh no, she sleeps ² like a dormouse; never mind, perhaps we had ^E better not risk it, so we won't sing any more; ⁱ don't you think the rock is high enough now?"

"Yes, Chouchou must be able to look into ^C the aquarium; if she cannot see into it, she will ^I cling on to the edge of the glass and try to ^C climb up, and then there will be a smash!"

"Yes, and what a cry after that! a real ¹ inundation; I fancy I can see her now, half ⁷ drowned, and calling every one to come to the ²

rescue," and both boys laughed heartily at the picture which George drew of poor Chouchou's misery over one of the small accidents of daily life.

"Now then, Roland, bring the glass; have you washed it?"

"Yes, it is as clear as crystal, we shall see through it splendidly."

"There, that's right, it's quite straight, . . . a little mortar here, and a little stone there, let me have that pretty pebble on my side . . . wait a minute—what have you got there?"

"Some jolly little shells, if we just stick them into the mortar they will look so pretty."

"Yes, won't they? If we put some earth into this large shell, we can plant a flower in it; look here on the walls, here's some scorpion grass, and a pretty little yellow flower, let's put them in; doesn't it look exactly like a real rock? Oh, what a state of excitement Chouchou will be in."

"What time is it? shall we have time to fill the aquarium?"

“ Half-past six ; all right, let’s wash our hands and go off fishing.”

“ Fishing ? why all the boats must have gone out long before this.”

“ Of course they have, and come back too, but I have an idea, come on quickly.”

Off they ran, George carrying a fisherman’s basket and an old empty jug, and Roland following him, and wondering where he was going.

George did not go far. In about two minutes he stopped before a house, where some steps led down into a cellar ; in that cellar Charles, the young fisherman, lived with his mother and little brothers and sisters.

The good mother was sitting on the steps now, knitting some warm socks for her boys.

“ Good morning, Mère Lisa,” cried George, “ has Charles come in yet ?”

“ Not yet, Monsieur George, but I expect him every minute ; he must be at the end of the road now.”

“ Yes, there he is with his little brother :

their baskets seem to be very heavy, they must have caught a lot of fish."

Mère Lisa came up to the top of the steps at the good news.

The boys had had very bad luck for the last few days, and now both Charles and little Jean could hardly carry their baskets, they were so full of fish.

The good old mother's face brightened considerably ; it was so hard to provide food for all those strong hearty children of hers, unless she had some fish to sell in the market.

"Capital luck, mother," cried Charles, "are you ready to start?"

"Yes, my boy, at once, you must follow me as soon as you can ; your breakfast is waiting for you, it will do you both good after your hard work, but here is Monsieur George who wants to see you particularly."

Charles took off his blue fisher's cap. "What can I do for you, Monsieur George?"

"I want some little live fish, Charles, those you gave my little sister, yesterday, are dead, and she is very unhappy about it. I thought

that perhaps Jean would get us some salt water in this jug, to put them into."

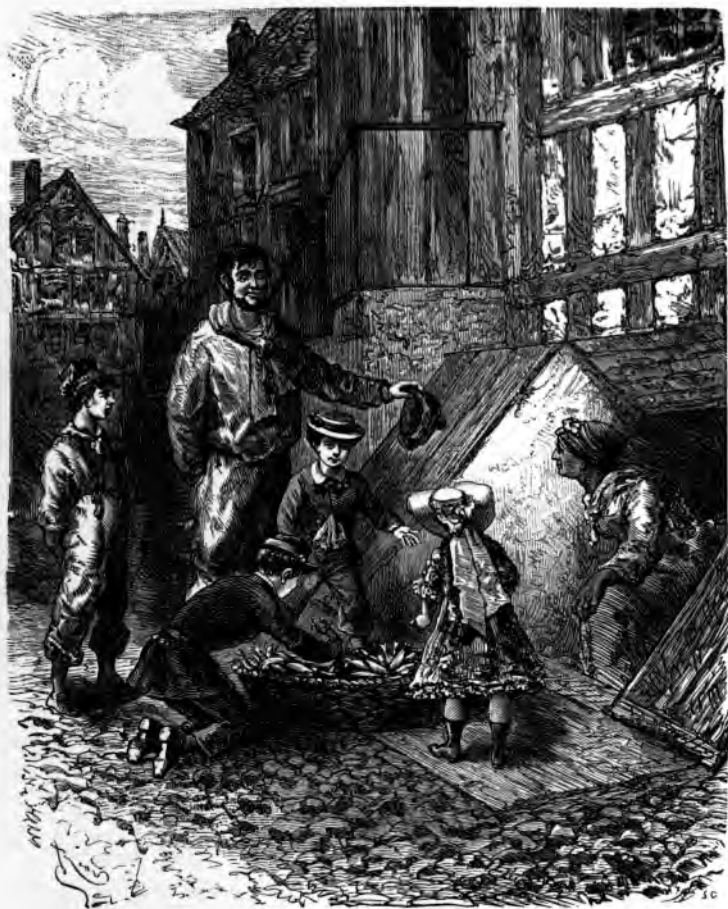
Charles laughed, and showed all his white teeth.

"I did not know the little lady meant to keep them, I thought she would have a doll's feast, and eat them herself; here, Jean, take the jug and go and get some salt water, then take it to Monsieur Despaigne's house. Now then, Monsieur George, let us look for some little fish, here is a very lively fellow, and another, choose which you like to have."

Roland nudged George's elbow; "Ask him if we may have those ruscles which are hanging to the net, and those little crabs, and that seaweed; they put all those kind of things into the aquariums in Paris."

"All right, but see, here comes Chouchou; Fidelia must have told her which way we came, and she has hunted us up."

"Oh, how lovely! how beautiful, lovely!" exclaimed the little girl; "what are you going to do with the dear little fish, boys?"



"It's a secret," answered Roland gravely, "and a secret worth knowing, I can tell you. Run home as fast as you can, and stay in the kitchen with Fidelia until the clock strikes eight, and then come out into the garden, and you shall know the secret."

Chouchou walked away, feeling quite sure that this wonderful secret had something to do with herself, and from the look on Roland's face she was sure it must be something very nice.

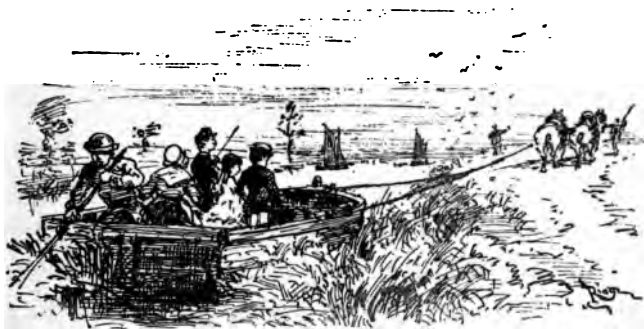
"Charles," said George, when Chouchou was well out of hearing, "may we have the seaweed, and the little crabs? they are too small to eat, are they not?"

"Take all you want, Monsieur George. No, I can't let you pay me; to begin with, all you are taking is not worth a farthing, and if it were, I could not take anything from you, after your mother's kindness when our father died. I will send little Jean to your house from time to time, to see if you want any salt water for your fish." And Charles ran down the steps to swallow a

hurried breakfast, and then to follow his mother to the market.

The boys rushed home, and Jean soon arrived with his jug of salt water, which was at once emptied into the aquarium, and the little fish were just beginning to swim about happily in their native element, when the clock struck eight, and Chouchou wild with excitement and impatience, ran out of the kitchen into the garden.





CHAPTER VIII.

SUNSHINE.

“OH dear,” said Chouchou, as the boys ran to meet her, “what does it all mean? what is the secret?”

Neither George nor Roland answered, but seized hold of her and made her fly towards the aquarium; then they made her dance round it so fast, that she could not see what it was; it seemed to her something very pretty, with flowers, and stones, and grass, and shells, and clear water, and little fish swimming about in it.

"Oh," she cried when the boys at last stood still, "what is it? Who has done it?"

They only laughed, and she threw her arms first round Roland's neck, and then round George's, and began to dance, and to clap her little hands in an ecstasy of delight. And yet only a few short hours before, Chouchou had called herself the most unhappy little girl in all Dunkirk.

"Oh, what pretty little fish," she said, "much prettier than those Charles gave me yesterday, but won't they die?"

"No, they are in salt water."

"Oh, how lovely," continued the delighted Chouchou; "look at the little crab trying to hide himself under the stones—and there is another climbing . . . and the little muscles! and the flowers, and the grass, and the shells, and everything, oh, you beautiful pretty things—"

"Breakfast!" cried Fidelia in a loud voice.

"Yes, we will come directly," answered Roland, "but we must look out for Blancminette. Have you the guard, George?"

"Yes, here it is; it is a great deal too large, but we must just put it on for fear of Blancminet, and after breakfast we will cut it to the right size. Come on now, I am as hungry as a hunter."

"I should think you were," said Fidelia, "why you have been at work ever since five o'clock; and all for you, Mademoiselle Chouchou, I hope you mean to behave very well to the young gentlemen to-day."

Chouchou frowned, evidently Fidelia did not think that she behaved well every day, but she was so pleased with the aquarium that the frown soon passed away, and there was not the ghost of a tear in the blue eyes. She ate her breakfast very quickly, so as to be able to run back to the garden, to put the finishing touches to Roland's and George's handiwork.

Madame Despaigne gave the children some seeds to be sown on the rockwork, and Monsieur Despaigne went into his library and brought out a big book with pictures in it, of all kinds of creatures which would live in a glass case filled with salt water.

He also gave them an India-rubber tube, so that they might empty the water out of the aquarium, without frightening the fish when fresh water was required.

Before the end of the week the population of the aquarium had wonderfully increased ; there were added to it, two lovely sea anemones, six oysters, and a number of prawns and shrimps, and different little fish of all kinds.

Little Jean, when he came to bring the salt water, was struck dumb with astonishment at what he saw, and went home to tell his mother and Charles, that Monsieur George and his cousin must be wonderfully clever to have made anything half as beautiful.

The seeds grew, and covered the rock with pretty verdure, and everybody was pleased with the aquarium.

On the fourth day a misfortune happened, a fish and a prawn were found dead in the glass, and Chouchou of course cried as much as she could have cried if she had heard of the death of two of her dearest friends.



Roland was very angry with her, and told her that he was sorry he had thought about making the aquarium for her if this was the way she was going to behave ; it was quite certain, he said, that some of the creatures would die every day, and the whole thing had better be done away with at once. Of course as the fish died, the glass must be replenished by others, Charles would always provide it with fish, so the aquarium would never be empty.

Monsieur and Madame Despaigne always tried to make their nephew's holidays as bright and happy as possible, and for the next few days there were several excursions made in the neighbourhood, one on the canal in a boat which two strong horses walking at the edge of the water drew along ; the children were very much amused at this. On all these occasions Fidelia packed up a most tempting basket of provisions, to which ample justice was always done, by the happy party sitting on the grass under the shade of the green

It was nearly a week after that unhappy croquet party, before the children again went down to the sands, and when Chouchou saw her little friends on the beach playing a spirited game, she felt very much inclined to run away.

Had she not told them that she would never, never forgive them? Forgive them for what? For having been too kind to her, and having tried to put her into a good temper, and make up to her for having lost that first game?

She knew now, what she would not confess to herself on that wretched evening, that she, and she only had been in the wrong, perhaps they in their turn would not forgive her, and she loved them all so much, and they were always so kind and good to her.

Poor Chouchou's heart was very full, and tears of real sorrow were in her eyes, and because they were so real, she tried to hide them, and wiped them away with her sleeve.

All of a sudden she heard her name called out, by three bright young voices, and she saw

Paul, and Robert, and Clara running at full speed towards her.

“Oh, I am so glad to see you, Chouchou,” said little Clara.

“Come along and have a good game,” said the boys, “what a time it is since we saw you.”

Chouchou could not speak; but she threw her arms round Clara, and now the tears would not be kept back.

“What is the matter with her?” said Paul to George.

And George only shrugged his shoulders and answered, “Another inundation, as if there was not water enough in the sea without that.”

The poor little girl in the midst of her sobs tried to say something that no one could understand; at last they arrived at something of her meaning.

“You—you—you—will—will—will—for—for—give me then?”

“What for?” said Paul, “for having been cross the other day? you made yourself un-

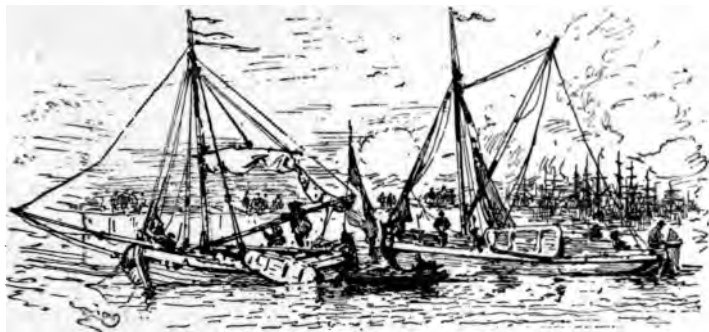
happy, you did not do us any harm, Chou Catherine I mean."

"Oh, please, Paul, call me Chouchou, to show that you have quite forgiven me."

"Well then, come along, Chouchou, you shall be on my side to-day, and see if we don't beat them hollow."

They played a great many games of croquet that day, and sometimes one side won and sometimes the other, and Chouchou bore being beaten quite goodtemperedly, and even complimented the others upon their good play. She enjoyed the afternoon thoroughly, and made up her mind never in future to be put out because her side lost the game.





CHAPTER IX.

A DAY ON THE WATER.

THE next morning Monsieur Despaigne was late for breakfast.

“Excuse me, my dear,” he said to his wife, “but I have been on to the quay, and there I met Monsieur Tolma, who owns the beautiful steamer which was launched yesterday, and he took me over her.”

“I suppose it is a very beautiful ship,” answered Madame Despaigne; “it is built for service in the Mediterranean, is it not?”

"Yes, a passenger ship from Marseilles to Corsica."

"The mouth of the Rhone, Marseilles, Corsica, Ajaccio," murmured Chouchou, giving a little lesson out of her geography book.

"How great Chouchou is at geography," said Roland laughing.

"Yes," answered his aunt, "I think she likes it better than anything else; tell them, Chouchou, how Monsieur Tolma's steamer will get from Dunkirk to Marseilles."

"By the Straits of Calais, mother, and then round by Gibraltar."

"Bravo, little one," said her father, "well, since you know so much about the way she is going, how should you like to come and see the steamer itself?"

"She is going out of the harbour today to try her machinery; she will not be out long, only three or four hours, and Monsieur Tolma wants us all to go with him—what do you say to it?"

The three children shouted and clapped their

hands. "Three cheers for the—what's the name of the steamer, uncle?"

"The Seagull."

"Three cheers for the Seagull. Seagulls fly very fast, don't they, uncle?"

"Yes, have you never seen one?"

"Only in the gardens in Paris, where they are put to eat up the slugs. Their wings are cut, and they look dreadfully miserable, but they are pretty birds with white and grey plumage."

"Oh, how wicked it is to cut the wings of the dear birds," sighed Chouchou, with tears in her voice, but they did not succeed in reaching her eyes this time. Roland had half a mind to answer that it was quite as wicked, to put fish into an aquarium; but on second thoughts he was silent, he feared if he hinted at such a thing that Chouchou might order him to throw all the creatures he had been at such trouble in collecting into the sea.

Monsieur Despaigne told the children that they must make haste, as the Seagull must go out with the tide, which was fast going down.

Breakfast was hurried over, and the three rushed off to get ready ; George and Roland took the fishing basket with them, in case they picked up anything that would do for the aquarium, and Chouchou ran into the kitchen to kiss Blancminet—she had never been a sea voyage before, and thought it was the correct thing to take an affectionate farewell of her favourite.

She was rather frightened when she first saw the large steamer, with the steam puffing furiously out of the engines, and a great column of black smoke rising up to the bright blue sky.

But when she saw the Captain and Monsieur Tolma come forward to meet her father, and all the trim clean looking sailors on the deck, she took courage, and gave her hand to a smart looking little cabin boy who helped her across the plank which led from the pier to the ship.

The plank trembled a good deal, and she was very glad when she got safely over it, and she walked bravely along the deck refusing to take

father's hand. A few minutes more and the Seagull was moving majestically out of the harbour, amid the shouts of the people who stood on the quay waiting to see her off.

No one could tell that the ship was moving, everything in the town—the harbour, the church tower, the houses—seemed to be gliding along like the slides in a magic lantern. Chouchou asked Roland why it was that all the boats that were at anchor seemed to be going backwards.

‘But *they* are not moving. *We* are moving,’ answered Roland, “wait a minute, look at that one where there is a little sailor up in the rigging, you see the cord that keeps it fast to the quay? it is not moving, we are passing it—there, see, we have passed it, do you understand now, Chouchou?”

‘Yes,’ said Chouchou, too much astonished to say many words, and perhaps just a little bit frightened.

‘Oh, how fast we are going,” cried Roland, “we have hardly time to look at the other

vessels ; here we are at the end of the quay, no more ships now."

"See," said George, "there are Paul, and Robert, and Clara, walking with their father at the end of the pier ; wave your handkerchief, Chouchou, make haste or they won't see you."

Chouchou waved her small white handkerchief with all her might.

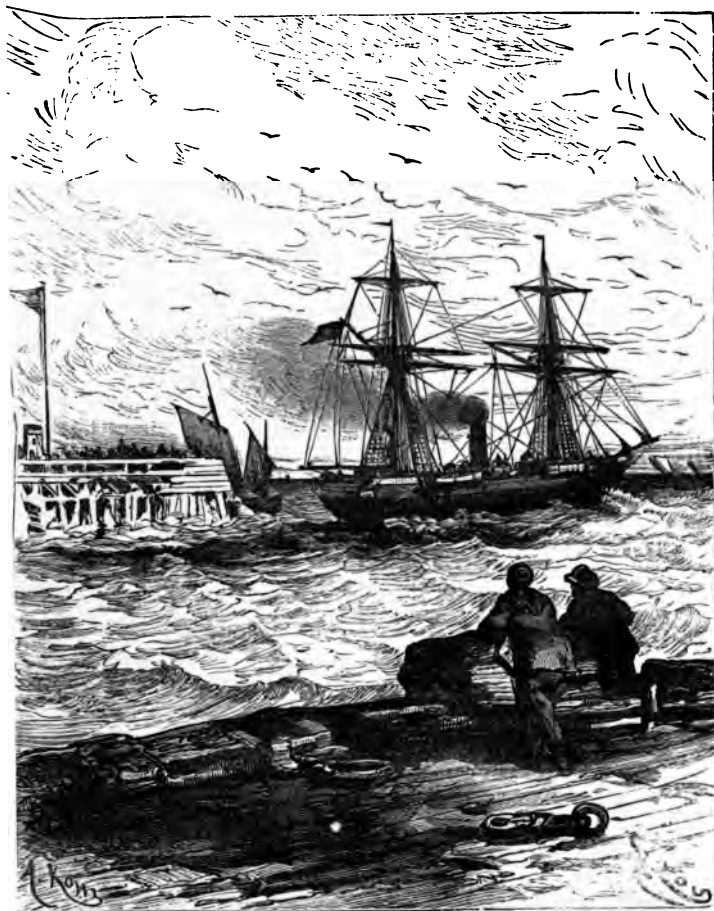
"They see me, look ! there is Clara waving her handkerchief—oh, the horrible wind."

What had the wind done to make Chouchou call it horrible, and to cause a very cross look to come upon her little face ?

Poor wind, it had only done its duty ; it had blown a little gentle breeze, and in its onward path it had carried away Chouchou's handkerchief, and made it fly in the air like a great white butterfly.

Such a pretty handkerchief it was too, with the initials C. D. embroidered in one corner in blue letters.

This really was something to cry about, and



Chouchou was just ready to begin, when Roland seized both her hands and said very gravely,

“You mustn’t cry this time, Chouchou, for you will have nothing with which to wipe your eyes.”

Chouchou could not help laughing at this, and then she remembered that there was nothing more uncomfortable than tears rolling down one’s cheeks with no means of getting rid of them, so she forgave the “horrible wind,” and tried to think of something else.

The steamer was now in open sea, and began to pitch a little ; but in spite of the somewhat uncomfortable motion, the whole party went to look at the handsome cabins. They were all very grandly fitted up with berths, and sofas, and mirrors, and bright curtains. Chouchou declared she should like to live on board ship, and have such pretty rooms for her very own.

In the saloon there was a piano, and Madame Despaigne opened it, and began to play a valse.

“A polka, please, aunt,” cried Roland, “come, Chouchou, and let us have a dance.”

But dancing under the circumstances was a

somewhat difficult matter, for just then the steamer was rolling heavily from side to side, but Chouchou was determined to show what a good sailor she was, and danced nearly as well as she did at home.

Suddenly the music ceased, and Madame Despaigne got up, and closed the piano, and sat down in an arm-chair.

"What is the matter with mother?" said Chouchou to George, "is she ill, or is she vexed?"

"Oh, she's all right, only she does not want to play the piano all day, for you two to dance; come on, and have a look at the engine-room, it's much better fun."

Chouchou thought at first that the men who looked after the engines were negroes, and when she heard that the coal made their faces black, she pitied them very much, and was very glad that her father was not a fireman; she stood with the boys for a long time looking at the furnace upon which the men were continually throwing great lumps of coal, and then finding it rather warm, she went upon the upper deck again.

The first person she saw there was her mother stretched upon the deck, and looking so white and ill that poor Chouchou thought that she must be going to die.

She went up to her, and threw herself upon her, crying and sobbing violently,—she quite forgot that she had no pocket-handkerchief.

Madame Despaigne lifted herself up, and spoke with difficulty.

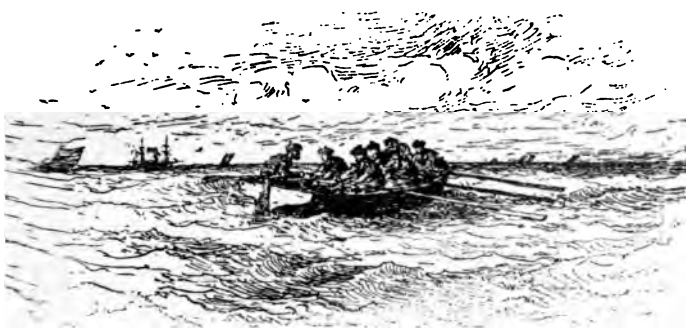
“Do be quiet, Chouchou,” she said, “it is nothing, it is only the motion of the steamer that has upset me a little, do go away like a good child, and let me be quite quiet.”

But Chouchou still kept her arms tight round her mother’s neck, and at last her father came and carried her off, and gave her a good scolding for her folly, and lent her his large pocket-handkerchief.

It really was not much too large for the number of tears it had to wipe away ; for Chouchou cried because her mother was not well, and cried because her father scolded her, in fact there was no comforting her, she would not even

look at the pretty ships which passed the Seagull, with their white sails flapping in the breeze, and dancing over the waves, so lightly and gracefully.





CHAPTER X.

TOM.

THE wind soon went down, and when the steamer turned round to return to Dunkirk, the sea was quite calm, and Madame Despaigne was able to get up and walk about just as well as though she had been on shore. Suddenly a voice was heard in shrill sharp tones calling out,

“A man overboard!”

Of course every one ran to the side of the steamer to see the drowning man, and those

who of course would go to his rescue. A black object with a little white about it appeared for an instant, and then disappeared amid the waves, a good deal to the right of the Seagull, but it was impossible to see what it was, rather who it was,—for, of course, every one thought it *must* be a man.

A boat was lowered, and some sailors were sent off in it to try and save the poor drowning creature, and the Captain ordered the steamer to be stopped, so that he might at once be brought on board and looked after.

“Do you think they will be in time to save him?” said Madame Despaigne to the Captain.

“I hope so, for it seems to me he is a capital swimmer; but I can’t make out where he comes from. If he fell overboard one of the vessels coming out of the harbour, it is most extraordinary that they did not stop to pick him up. Ah! the boat is quite near him now,—let me have a look through the telescope. What are the sailors at?” he said, “it seems to me that they are laughing,—they are quite near the





man now, they are holding out the boat-hook to him,—and after all it's not a man,—it's a large dog!"

"A dog!" exclaimed Madame Despaigne.

"Yes, a dog," answered the Captain, laughing; "look through the telescope yourself,—he is standing up in the boat shaking himself."

Madame Despaigne looked first, then George, Roland, and Chouchou, and they saw a great black mountain dog with a white nose and throat, giving himself a good shake, and the sailors a good showerbath.

The boat was soon alongside of the vessel, and the men and the dog stood on the deck.

The Captain ordered the steam to be got up, for he said there was no time to lose, as the tide was going out fast, and it would not be pleasant to have to anchor outside the harbour for the night, all because of a dog.

When the dog was a little dry, Chouchou, who was not afraid of any animal, began to caress him; he liked this very much, and he rubbed his noble black head against her little

hand, and he would not leave her side, particularly after she had given him one of the delicious cakes which the Captain had taken care to provide for his young visitors.

The sailors were of course very much amused at the whole thing, and laughed heartily at the account the men who had been sent off in the boat, gave of their astonishment at seeing the big black head with the white nose appearing above the waves.

"Do any of you know whose dog it is?" asked the Captain.

They all shook their heads, none of them knew him; but a fireman who came up from the engine-room at that moment saw the fine fellow, and exclaimed,

"Tom, what are you doing here, my old boy? Come here, my good dog. Where is your master?"

At the sound of his name Tom wagged his tail, and when he heard mention made of his master, he jumped upon the fireman and loaded him with all kinds of caresses, and at last he

stood upon his hind legs and put his two front paws upon the man's shoulders.

"You know the dog, Philip?" said the Captain.

"Well, sir," answered the fireman, lifting his cap, "I know him, and I don't know him. I met him at the inn this morning, and I took a good deal of notice of him, because his master told me his history, but I had never seen him before."

"We have just fished him out of the sea; have you any idea how he got there?"

"I think I can explain it, sir. He belongs to a sailor named Louis Darbaut, of Nantes, who came to Dunkirk in the Beautiful Star, a pretty brig bound for the Norwegian coast. Darbaut is fond of his dog, who has saved his life three times, and he had taken him with him on board the Beautiful Star. She put into port here to take in a cargo of oil, and as the captain did not like having a dog on board his ship, he gave Darbaut his discharge.

"He did not much mind this, for he found a

very good berth on board a schooner bound for the Coast of Africa ; but as he was afraid his new Captain might also object to Tom, he took him on board on the sly this morning.

“ I saw him go off with the boatswain’s mate and two sailors whom he had taken into his confidence ; I can only imagine, sir, that Tom showed himself too soon, and that the Captain who is not soft-hearted, threw him overboard.”

“ Yes, it must have been so ; take care of the dog, Philip, and when we get ashore we must see what is to be done with him, for I cannot keep him here.”

Monsieur Despaigne was walking up and down the deck, when Chouchou, the large pocket-handkerchief waving in her hand like a flag, tears in her eyes, and sobs in her voice, threw herself into his arms.

“ Oh, father ! poor Tom ! the wicked Captain poor Louis Darbaut.”

“ What do you mean, my darling ? who are all these people ?”

“ He thinks his dog is drowned, father, how

sorry he must be; the wicked Captain threw Tom into the water."

Then Chouchou drew her father to the place where Tom, worn out with the fatigues of the day, was sleeping quietly at the fireman's feet.

Of course, Monsieur Despaigne soon heard the whole history of Tom, and of Louis Darcourt, and Chouchou's tears flowed afresh when she heard that no one knew what was to be done with the poor dog.

Monsieur Despaigne did not attempt to console her, but went and spoke to his wife, then they called Chouchou to come to them.

"Should you like us to take Tom home with us?" said her mother.

"Oh mother, can you? will you? it is too good to be true—oh! thanks, thanks, ever so many thanks, oh, what will Fidelia say?"

The steamer was in the harbour now, and very soon was alongside of the quay, and the passengers landed.

The Captain sent the fireman, in charge of Tom, to Monsieur Despaigne's house, and Chou-

chou walked by his side the whole time, "so that he might not feel so strange," she said, "for he already knew her quite well."

As soon as they reached home, the boys introduced Tom to Nero, who received him very politely ; although he was very good friends with Blancminet, there is no doubt that he often wanted a companion of his own species, and Tom, like all large dogs, was very kind and amiable to all the little dogs with whom he came in contact. Nero was a little yellow wolf-dog with straight ears and a curly tail, Tom you know was black and white, with beautiful half-curling hair.

George and Roland went off to mend a large dog-kennel which was no longer used, and was very much out of repair. Chouchou invited Tom to rest upon the dining-room sofa, and sat beside him, and gazed on him and sighed deeply.

"What is the matter, Chouchou?" said her mother, "I thought you were so pleased that we had brought Tom home?"

"Yes, I am, mother, but I am thinking of

Poor Louis Darbaut . . . he believes that Tom is drowned."

"Well, write and tell him that he is not, that he is quite safe and well."

"Write to him, mother? I don't know where he is."

"But I know; I asked the fireman to give me his address."

"You think of everything, mother."

"Well, it is necessary that mothers should think of everything, as little girls think of nothing. Whilst you were crying over Louis Darbaut's grief, I was making inquiries about him, and I find that he sailed in a vessel called the Coquette, which is to stop three days at Bordeaux, to take in a cargo of wine."

"Well, mother?"

"Well, Chouchou, you must write to him, and address the letter to Louis Darbaut, on board the Coquette, Bordeaux Harbour. I will direct the envelope for you if you like."

"Oh yes, mother! dear mother! you are so good, mother!"

And Chouchou kissed her mother, and then she kissed Tom's white nose, and ran off to fetch a pen, and an inkstand, and some paper, so that she might begin her letter at once.

It was rather a difficult letter for a little girl to write, and Chouchou spoilt several sheets of paper, and had to take it several times to her mother before the letter was considered fit to send to Monsieur Louis Darbaut. This is what Chouchou wrote :—

“MONSIEUR LOUIS DARBAUT,

Do not be sorry and think that Tom is drowned, for he is not drowned. The Captain of the Seagull, who is very kind, picked him up in a boat, and Philip the fireman knew that he was your dog. Philip told my father that Tom was a very good dog, and so he let me bring him home, and I am to take care of him.

You will find him when you come back, at Monsieur Despaigne's, in Dunkirk, and he will know you quite well, for I mean to speak to him about you every day, so that he may not

forget you. Good-bye, Monsieur Louis Dabaut, I send you my love, and Tom sends you his love.

“CATHERINE DESPAIGNE.”





CHAPTER XI.

OUR FRIENDS' FRIENDS ARE NOT ALWAYS OUR
FRIENDS.

CHOUCHOU stood on a little footstool behind her mother's chair whilst she directed the envelope, which was to take the welcome tidings of Tom's safety to his master, when suddenly there was a great noise in the hall.

"Bow-wow-wow," barked Tom in his loud voice.

"Meow-meow-meow," answered Blancminet furiously.

Chouchou jumped down from her footstool and ran to the door. Her mother followed her fearing that the little girl might receive a scratch, or a bite, or perhaps both, if she tried to separate the combatants.

Tom had a habit of looking upon all cats as his natural enemies ; it was not his fault, it was the way in which he had been brought up ; he had not been taught that there are some cats which are entitled to a certain amount of respect.

He had caught sight of Blancminet, and had thought it a capital opportunity for a chase.

Blancminet resented the arrival of this large intruder, who doubtless would expect his share of licking the plates, as well as a part of the caresses of his little mistress, and consequently had looked at Tom very rudely, and retiring to a distant corner of the hall he meowed, and swore in a most unseemly fashion, and was quite ready to make a dart at Tom's eyes.

"Tom," said Madame Despaigne in a severe tone.

Tom, knowing he was in the wrong, lay down at once, wagging his tail as though he wished to excuse himself; but he could not resist growling a little; if he could have spoken he would certainly have said to Madame Despaigne,

"I do not wish to do you or your little girl any harm, for I know you are very good, but I hate your cat, and what would it matter to you if I strangled him?"

Chouchou meanwhile had taken possession of Blancminet, calling him by every endearing name she could think of to try and console him. But Blancminet was so frightened that he behaved himself like a mad thing, and swore at Chouchou quite as much as he had done at Tom.

At this moment, Roland and George opened the door that led into the garden, they came to announce that the kennel was quite ready, and they had even found the chain which had belonged to the old watch dog, which would do splendidly for Tom.

Blancminet seized the opportunity of the door being open to jump out of Chouchou's arms, and to rush like lightning across the garden, then to leap on to the opposite wall—and then, alas, he was seen no more.

Chouchou was in despair.

“Naughty Tom, horrid Tom, ungrateful bad Tom; we saved you, and you want to kill my cat, my dear beautiful Blancminet.”

By this time Tom had forgotten all about Blancminet. He had shown him his teeth because he *was* a cat, but he really did not particularly want to strangle him, and knowing that he had done something very wrong, and that the little girl was in trouble, he went up to her, and rubbed his great head against her skirts, and put out his red tongue and licked her hands, and raised his wistful eyes to her face, as though he would say: “Are you unhappy? I am so sorry! What is troubling you? Not me surely?”

“See, he is asking you to forgive him,” said Madame Despaigne. “We will chain him up

in the kennel for to-night: he will not be able then to hurt Blanchminet. To-morrow we must try and make them better friends."

"I will forgive him, mother; but if he loves me why can't he love my cat? O, Tom, won't you love my nice little cat? I like all my friends to love each other, do you understand me, Tom?"

A burst of suppressed laughter caused her to turn her head towards the garden door.

"Go away, both of you," she cried angrily, shaking her little fist at the boys, "Mother, Roland and George are laughing at me."

And poor Chouchou really worn out with the day's excitement, threw herself into her mother's arms.

Madame Despaigne felt that she could make some excuse for her, and tried to calm her, but Chouchou between her sobs kept on saying,

"Naughty boys, they laughed at me, because I want my friends to love each other."

"Come, come, my darling," said her mother, when she had carried Chouchou in her arms

into the drawing-room, "you really must not be so silly. Tom and Blancminet did not know each other, and cats and dogs who are not mutually acquainted are naturally enemies. But Tom is very intelligent, and we must make him understand that Blancminet is the cat of the house, and that he must not hurt him; and if he refuses to understand us, we must keep him chained up during the day, and only let him loose at night when Blancminet is in the house."

"But I want them to love each other, mother; I love them both so much, and I don't like them to quarrel. I cannot be happy if I have friends who do not love each other."

"Nonsense, Chouchou; it often happens that we love two people who do not care for each other, who even dislike each other. What would you do in such a case?—suppose, for instance, that Roland and George were enemies, instead of being the good friends they are?"

"Oh, mother, I should die of grief."

"That would be a funny way of trying to

reconcile them. It would be better to talk to each of them gently, and to try and make them better friends ; but I thought you were very angry with both of them ? Have you forgiven them already ? Do you remember that a few minutes ago you called them naughty boys, and sent them away ? Suppose they refuse to come back ?”

Madame Despaigne really spoke in joke, to try and distract Chouchou's attention from the feud between Tom and Blancminet, but Chouchou only found in her words another cause for tears,—if she really had offended the boys what should she do?—perhaps they would never forgive her !

But at this moment two merry voices in the corridor called out,

“Chouchou, Chouchou, where are you ? we are bringing you back Blancminet.”

Chouchou jumped out of her mother's arms, and ran to open the door.

She had only to look at Roland and George to see that she was forgiven,—George held



Blancminet in his arms, and the poor cat, quite pacified now, rubbed his little head against his master's sleeve, purring more beautifully than he had ever been known to purr before.

Chouchou kissed Blancminet, and each of the boys in turn, and then she asked the best news of Tom.

“Tom is asleep in the kennel, on some nice clean straw,” answered Roland, “and he is very comfortable. Make your mind easy, Chouchou, he will not frighten your cat again. We have begun to make them better acquainted,—George climbed upon the tiles of the tool-house to catch Blancminet, and when he had caught him, we took him to the kennel, where we had chained up Tom; then I explained to Tom that he might run after all the other cats in Dunkirk if he liked, but that Blancminet was a friend. He understood me quite well, and held out his paw to Blancminet. Blancminet is more stupid and pig-headed; it was in vain that we told him that he would find Tom

a very pleasant companion, he swore like a maniac, and wanted to make a dart at his eyes ; he even scratched George, who was holding him, but that does not matter ; the first step in the right direction is taken, and I believe to-morrow you will see the two gentlemen sleeping in each other's arms,—I mean paws—”

But Chouchou was not listening any longer.

“ He scratched George ?—poor George !” she cried, stroking her brother's hand gently, and looking pitifully at the red mark which Blancminet's claws had left there.

“ And Roland also, although he does not boast of it,” said George, laughing, “ he wanted to punish us, you see, Chouchou, for being such naughty boys.”

This was the only revenge that George and Roland took upon Chouchou ; they saw she was going to cry again,—tears of penitence this time, so they carried her off to have a good game of dominoes, and to end up the evening pleasantly.

Before Chouchou went to bed she visited Tom in his kennel, and Blancminet in his chair in the kitchen, and she begged each of them to be good friends with the other for the future.





CHAPTER XII.

THE FALLEN NEST.

THERE were four tall poplars at the end of the garden where a great many birds made their nests every year. You could hear them of an evening, just before sunset, chipping merrily, as though they were wishing each other good night. Perhaps too they were telling each other the events of the day, the trouble they had had to find food for their little ones, or the terrible visit of some bird of prey which had hovered round the poplars for a long

time ; then probably the mother-birds talked of their children, how one had opened its eyes, and another had a few feathers on its wings, and another on its tail. Then after a while the chatter ceased, and each bird went to its own home,—the little ones safe at the bottom of their nests, under their mother's wings.

Their morning song was just as pretty as their evening one, but Chouchou never heard that,—the little birds were very early risers, and when their day began she was still fast asleep.

This morning, as soon as she was dressed, she ran into the garden. There had been a great storm during the night, Fidelia had told her,—of course she had not heard it,—and she was anxious to see if a thunderbolt had by any chance fallen upon the aquarium.

No thunderbolt had fallen, and the little fish were as lively as ever. Chouchou looked at them for a minute, and then skipped round the garden with her skipping-rope. All of a sudden she stopped.

"Oh! what is that?" she said; "George, Roland, do come and see,—a nest! I really believe it is a nest. Oh how glad I am that I did not tread upon it."

It really was a nest, and what is more, there were four little balls of red flesh inside it which greatly astonished Chouchou.

"What are those horrid little things?" she said.

The boys burst out laughing.

"Why those are the young birds."

"Young birds! why they have no feathers."

"They will have soon, if they don't die; see, this one is beginning to have some,—look at those little black specks on his wings, those are the feathers beginning to grow."

"Oh, if we could but keep them,—we must take them to mother."

Chouchou put the nest into the crown of her hat, and went to find her mother.

Madame Despaigne shook her head, *the* birds were very young to live without *thei* mother's care; they were almost dead *w* *th*

Cold, and it was only by breathing upon them gently that they seemed to revive a little.

Two of them were much stronger than the others, and as soon as they felt the heat they moved a little, and tried to raise their heads, and at last they cried, and opened their beaks as though they were hungry.

"They are asking for something to eat," said George.

"Give them some soaked bread, and tell Fidelia to boil an egg hard,—little birds can often be brought up on hard-boiled eggs."

"What queer little things they are,—one is opening its eyes."

"I think," said Madame Despaigne, "that we may do something with these two, but the others are too small,—indeed I think that this one is dead."

Chouchou lowered the corners of her mouth, and her eyes looked very suspiciously brilliant.

"At it again," said Roland to himself, "when will it cease?" and he ran off with the

poor little dead bird, and then tried to interest Chouchou in the living ones.

Two of them ate very well, and then they were covered with some cotton wool, to take the place of their mother's soft wings, and they went to sleep, whilst the children ran out into the garden to play.

Chouchou took the nest out with her so that she might feed the little birds when they awoke. She got upon a chair, and put it into a lilac tree, and then she sat in the shade to dress her doll, in sight of her treasure, so that she might see that Blancminet did not go near it.

The boys were at the other end of the garden, playing some game of their own.

After a little time Chouchou heard the cry of some birds, but it was not the little birds in the nest,—no, the sound came from two sparrows, who were flying about in all directions, and seemed to be looking for something.

They flew from the poplars to the grass, and then on to the bushes and shrubs,—and at last



One of them perched upon the lilac tree, and redoubled its cries. It seemed to be calling its companion, who also began to cry in a little sharp shrill tone. But they neither of them seemed to be grieved, on the contrary, they appeared very happy.

Chouchou got up very softly, and then she saw one of the sparrows jump on the nest; the little birds woke up, and opened their beaks, then the large sparrow gave them something to eat, and flew off to get some more food, and its companion took its place near the young ones.

"Their father and mother," said Chouchou to herself. "Oh, here is the mother coming back, and the father is going away. I should like George and Roland to see them, if I did not think the birds would be frightened,—oh, there they are going away together, and the little ones are quite quiet. Boys, come here and see something so pretty."

The boys ran up to Chouchou, and she told them what she had seen, and about the joy of

the two large birds at finding the little ones and the children threw some bread upon the ground, and after a minute or two the sparrow came and carried off the crumbs which were furthest from the children, and then after a time they grew bolder, and came up quite close to them,—Chouchou was wild with delight.

At the children's early dinner there was a great deal of talk about the little birds, and Monsieur Despaigne said he was sure that they would get on very well now, and would get tame enough to eat out of their hands, if they did not frighten them.

"Only," he said, "you must get a ladder, and put the nest at the top of the lilac tree, where the branches are too weak to bear the weight of a cat, otherwise Blancminet will make a mouthful of them."

Chouchou was indignant that any one should think it possible that Blancminet could be guilty of anything so cruel, "he was much too good a cat to eat little birds," she said, "she had always told him he must not do so, and he was very

obedient, and besides, there was nothing to fear, for the father and mother sparrows were there to take care of their children."

All these reasons were of course very foolish, and probably Chouchou herself knew that they were not at all good ones. Her true reason for not wishing the nest to be moved to the top of the lilac tree, was that she would not then be able to see the little birds.

As soon as dinner was over, she ran off to the garden again. What a noise the birds were making; fathers, and mothers, and little ones all screaming together as though they were in terrible distress.

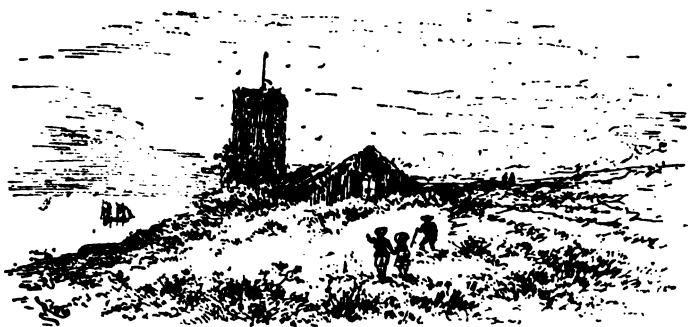
Chouchou ran as fast as she could, and was soon followed by Roland, who arrived in time to seize Blancminet, and to snatch one of the poor little featherless birds out of his mouth.

The nest had fallen to the ground, and only one little bird was left. Roland had interrupted Blancminet's breakfast.

Of course Chouchou cried for the rest of the day, Blancminet was shut up and received a

good beating, and the nest with its occupant was put on the top branch of tree, and in time the poor little bird feed out of the children's hands, and upon Chouchou's head.





CHAPTER XIII.

VICTORIA.

ROLAND and George were very anxious to make an excursion to a village at some distance from Dunkirk, where an old church was to be seen buried in the sand ; only the tower stood above the beach, and the only way of getting into the church was through a window on a level with the ground.

Of course the boys could easily walk there and back, but Chouchou's little legs would hardly have carried her so far, and neither George nor

Roland quite liked leaving her behind, she was so fond of excursions, and once when they had talked about this particular walk, she had clapped her hands and said how nice it would be, and perhaps they were just a little afraid that if they left the little girl at home she would have quite melted away before they returned, she would have shed so many tears.

Roland's mother far away in Paris solved the difficulty.

One morning a wooden case arrived by train, on which Chouchou read her own name and address printed in large letters.

There was great excitement whilst the box was being opened, Chouchou had wished to cut the string, but this her mother would not allow, all the knots, and oh, how many there were, had to be undone separately, and then the pincers had to be brought to take the nails out of the cover, and at last up went the lid, and under a piece of very white cambric muslin, there appeared a number of pretty little frocks, and bonnets, and hats,—blue, and red, and pink,

and white. These were lifted up, and Chouchou literally screamed with joy,

“Oh, mother, look! what a beautiful doll!”

It was a beautiful doll; it lay at the bottom of the box, tied down with bright ribbons, to prevent its shaking about and being broken, and it smiled, and showed pretty little white teeth, and very rosy lips.

Its arms and legs looked, Chouchou remarked, just like real arms and legs, and it had great blue eyes, and pink cheeks, and fair hair as fine as silk, capable of being plaited or curled, or dressed in any way its little mistress might like.

It had on a long white night-dress, but the rest of its things were all arranged round it in the box.

Chouchou took it out and kissed it rapturously.

“Oh, how good Aunt Adèle is to send me such a lovely, lovely doll,” she said.

Roland did not take much interest in his mother’s present.

“Aunt,” he said, pulling Madame Despaigne’s

sleeve to attract her attention, and speaking in a whisper, "Aunt, I say, don't you think we might go to see the old church to-day? Chouchou will be amused with her doll all day, and won't think about us."

Madame Despaigne nodded her approval of the plan, and Roland ran off to fetch George, and after going to the kitchen and getting Fidelia to pack up some sandwiches and cakes for them to take with them, off they started merry and happy as two boys could well be.

Chouchou was occupied with her doll the whole day long. Her aunt had certainly taken a great deal of trouble for her little niece; there were little sets of underlinen, and shoes, and boots, and stockings.

There was a grey frock trimmed with red, and a cream-coloured frock trimmed with blue, and an embroidered muslin frock with a red sash, and a white straw hat with a beautiful white feather was to be worn with the white muslin frock on grand occasions; a little brown straw hat was for every-day wear.

Then Chouchou's aunt must have known that it was sometimes rather cold at the sea-side, so she had knitted a little white shawl for Mademoiselle Victoria, for Victoria was the doll's name, the name which was embroidered in one corner of its little pocket-handkerchiefs.

Victoria had winter dresses as well as summer ones. A plaid frock, and a dark blue one, and a black velvet one, and a pretty seal-skin hat, and a little muff to match.

And Victoria had a parasol and an umbrella of her own, and a dressing case containing combs and brushes, and very tiny hair-pins,—never was any young lady sent out into the world provided with such lovely things. Of course all the underlinen and all the dresses were tried on by turns, and the hats, and boots, and shoes also, and it was quite late in the afternoon when Chouchou, never, it must be confessed, having given one thought to Roland or George, took her treasure into the garden, to bid good-night, she said, to the little birds.

There was a great chirping and chattering,

Chouchou thought that it meant that the birds were admiring Victoria, then gradually the noise ceased, and all was silent—the birds went to sleep, and Chouchou, tired with the pleasure and excitement of the day, put her treasure down on the bench at her side, and looked dreamily at the last ray of the setting sun lighting up the aquarium. The water was clear and shining, and the fish swam about looking, Chouchou thought, very pretty, so pretty that she went on staring at them, and at last her eyelids drooped and she fell fast asleep. All of a sudden she started up at the sound of her own name.

“Chouchou, Chouchou,” shouted George and Roland in chorus, “where are you?”

Chouchou rubbed her eyes and ran towards the house, wondering whether her brother and cousin had brought back anything pretty, or whether they had met with any wonderful adventures.

They had picked some lovely wild flowers, and they had also found some pretty pebbles, and some beautiful butterflies, and Chouchou



looked and admired, and tried hard to keep her blue eyes open, but the evening was so close and sultry that somehow or other she could not manage it; her head dropped upon the table, and Fidelia was called in to carry her up to bed before she gave the boys their supper.

Victoria herself could not have been more quiet than she was whilst she was being undressed, and when at last she knelt down to say her prayers Fidelia saw that her eyes were closed, and the little lips refused to move after Chouchou had said "Our FATHER."

So she lifted her into her little white bed, and left her there fast asleep.

The next morning Madame Despaigne stood by the side of her little girl's bed and awoke her with a kiss.

"How soundly you sleep, my darling, I have been in to see you very often during the night, there has been such a fearful storm, father and I thought once that the house would be blown down. I will send Fidelia to you at once, you have had such a good night's rest."

"I did not hear it," answered Chouchou sitting up in bed, as her mother left the room, and trying to look out of the window to see if any of the trees were blown down. The next minute a heavy step was heard upon the staircase, and the door which had been left ajar was pushed open, and Monsieur Tom walked in, looking very much delighted with himself, and carrying in his mouth the unhappy Victoria.

Poor Victoria! a more pitiable object it was impossible to imagine, her arms and legs were all melting, her beautiful light hair looked like a skein of tow dipped in paste, her frock, her boots, her petticoats, her hat, were all wet, and dirty, and tumbled, covered with mud and sand.

Chouchou screamed loudly—she remembered now how it had all happened; how she had left Victoria on the bench, when she heard the boys calling her—left her to the fury of that raging storm of which her mother had spoken. She hid her face in the pillow, and literally howled.

Tom could not understand her grief. He had seen Chouchou so engrossed with her doll the

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day before, that she did not pay him the smallest attention ; in fact, he would have been very jealous, only he was too noble a fellow to allow such a feeling as jealousy to enter into his heart.

All he did understand was, that his little mistress had appeared very fond of this smart young lady ; and finding her on the bench in the garden when he was taking his morning walk, he thought the very kindest thing he could do, was to take her to her at once.

So standing on his hind paws, and resting his front paws on the stool by the side of the bed, he persisted in presenting Victoria to her disconsolate mistress. At last he laid her on the bed, and began to lick Chouchou's hands, and to rub his head against her, to try and console her, and to beg her to tell him what made her so sorrowful.

But Chouchou took no notice of him, and only screamed all the louder, and her father, and mother, and Fidelia, and the boys all ran in to see what could be the cause of such an upset.



George and Roland could not help laughing at the spectacle presented by poor Victoria, and of course this only increased Chouchou's grief and anger. She called them cruel, and barbarous, and ferocious, and every long name she could think of, and then she turned for comfort to her mother, who was always kind and loving.

But Madame Despaigne did not pity her little girl, she was always rather giddy and careless over her toys, and this was not the first favourite which had suffered from her want of thought. Fidelia, too, spoke very sternly whilst she was dressing her.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mademoiselle Catherine," she said, (she only said Mademoiselle *Catherine* when she was extremely angry,) "for crying over a doll being spoilt as though you had lost some one you cared about very much. If any real unhappiness came to you, I wonder what you would do?"

"I just met poor Marie, the milkwoman's little girl, her little brother died of croup in the night, her eyes were very red, and you could see

that she was very sad, but she did her duty, and brought round the milk, and was as civil as ever. When I talked to her of her poor little Brother, she wiped her eyes so that her tears should not fall into the milk—but you—why, you have not as much courage as a baby of a year old.”

But Chouchou only cried the more at Fidelia’s rebuke, she was sorry for little Marie, she said, and the baby had been such a pretty little fellow ; then she sobbed over the boys’ naughtiness in laughing at her, and all the crying and sobbing ended up with a lament over the loss of Victoria.

This state of things went on all day ; her mother had to go out to see a friend who was ill, and the boys betook themselves to the sands, and did not ask her to go with them, they said they really could not walk through the streets with her, they should have a crowd round them to see what Chouchou was in such distress about.

Fidelia, who loved the little girl dearly, and

was really sorry for her, brought her some of her old dolls, and told her, that two of them were about the same size as Victoria, and she could dress them in some of that unfortunate young lady's pretty frocks. Chouchou only threw them away disdainfully, saying, "that she would never again play with those horrid old things."





CHAPTER XIV.

POOR TOINETTE.

TWO or three days passed away ; Victoria lay in a cupboard in Chouchou's room, no one spoke about her, she seemed to be quite forgotten.

Chouchou tried hard to be good ; she was very quiet and very gentle ; she had seen little Marie walking behind her brother's coffin as it was carried, covered with flowers, to the churchyard, and when the little girl came round with the milk in the afternoon, she had gone up to

her and kissed her, and said, "I am Marie."

And Marie had cried just a very said, "Our dear little baby has got Angels, and we must not cry very much."

And so Chouchou had been taught of patience, and saw how wrong she to behave as she had done because Victor spoiled, when Marie in her real, great so so good and gentle.

When Madame Despaigne saw that girl was really trying to do better, she that she meant to have Victoria mended was a shop at Lille where it could be she would see about sending the poor at once.

So Victoria was taken from the and wrapped up in paper, and Chouchou mother went out to find the carrier with his cart over to Lille once a week, and cut out any commissions that were given.

The carrier lived near the station walk from the Despaignes' house, and

way there Chouchou, who had quite recovered her spirits, told her mother all that she must say to the man—about Victoria's eyes, and hair, and complexion; and also he must beg the people at the shop to have her quite ready in a week, so that he might bring her back on his next journey.

The carrier was not at home, and his door was locked,—what was to be done? Must Victoria be taken back, to lie in the cupboard for another week? Chouchou looked very miserable, but she did not cry, on the contrary, she thought of little Marie and tried to smile.

Her mother knocked, and knocked, and knocked,—still no answer.

“If we could but make some of the neighbours hear,” she said, looking around her.

Just at this moment the door of the opposite house was opened, and a childish voice said,

“There are a lady and a little girl, Toinette, knocking at the carrier's.”

“Well, speak to them politely, and ask them to come in here,” said another childish voice.

Then the little boy opened the door wide and came forward, his cap in his hand. He was a pretty little fellow, rather younger than Chouchou, he did not seem to be in the least shy, he was evidently accustomed to talk to ladies.

"Will you come in, ma'am?" he said, "The nette wishes to speak to you."

Chouchou and her mother followed the boy into a very poor, but very clean room. A little girl about eight or nine years old was sitting near the window on an old high-backed, uncomfortable-looking chair, the seat of which was composed of rags of various colours. She looked very pale and thin as she sat there in the sunshine, in the bare dull room. At her feet lay some mysterious object, which a very fanciful imagination might have converted into a doll, whilst on the table at her side were a few old jugs and cups.

"Good morning, ladies," she said very politely; "you want the carrier; he is out, but he will be home this evening. If you have any

age for him, I will give it,—he asked me to
re any messages that might be brought him.
Madame Despaigne explained that she wanted
l taken to Lille to be mended, and she
the address of the shop on her visiting-
and said what she wanted done.

Here is the doll," she continued, and Vic-
was taken out of the paper.

Oh, how beautiful she is!" said the little
girl.

Ouchou was very much astonished. Poor
ria, beaten about by the storm, certainly
not worthy of the praise bestowed upon
y Toinette.

When her eye rested on the mysterious object
on the floor,—it consisted of a roll of rags, and
on top of it were some little bits of curled
wool, and under the wool were two black
spots, painted on a piece of white rag,—the
wool was hair, or rather meant to repre-
sent hair, the marks were eyebrows, and under
were two large blue beads, those were
eyes, and then a piece of the white rag

had been caught up to make a very celest—
little nose, and a piece of red cotton was t—
mouth,—and all these features, together w—
the rags, made up a doll which, until she s—
Victoria, poor Toinette had thought was t—
most beautiful doll it was possible to see.

Chouchou had heard that there were so—
little children in the world who were too p—
to buy even a penny doll, and who made
rag doll for themselves. Could this be a rag
doll,—this hideous thing?

Madame Despaigne went up to the p—
little girl, and showed her all Victoria's beau—
ties,—or rather explained what these beauties
had been before the storm, and would be again
after the doll's visit to Lille. Then she took
up the poor bundle of rags from the floor, and
said,

“And is this your doll, my little girl?”

“Yes, ma'am,” answered Toinette, blushing;

“I made it, and here is its frock.”

“You are very clever,—how old are you?”

“Nine years old, ma'am, and Joseph is nearly

six ; he is a very good little boy, and he takes great care of me."

"Are you ill?"

"No, ma'am, only I cannot walk, my legs are so weak ; I can stand for a minute or two, but that is all I can do."

Chouchou drew near to the old chair, and looked at Toinette wonderingly.

"And so you sit here all day?" continued Madame Despaigne.

"Yes, ma'am ; mother dresses me in the morning before she goes to her work, and she comes home at twelve o'clock to give us some dinner, and in the evening to give us our supper ; little Joseph is always with me, but I shall not have him long, for he is soon going to school."

Chouchou felt inclined to cry ; "Oh, how lonely you will be," she said.

"Yes, a little ; but the neighbours are very kind to me, and—and—" and the bright colour rushed into the little pale face as Toinette said in a low voice, "and God and the holy

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the rags, made up a doll which, until she saw
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Angels are always near,—I can never be quite alone.”

Chouchou was silent for a minute, and then she continued in a pitying tone, “And you cannot walk, nor run, nor jump, nor play upon the sands. What *do* you do all day?”

“I play with Joseph, and talk to him; and then I look out of the window at the cats walking on the roofs of the houses opposite, and at the birds flying in the air, and at the flowers which grow on the walls; do you see that pretty stock? it began to flower in April, and it has been so lovely ever since; then I look up at the sky and watch the clouds which fly along quickly when it is windy.”

Chouchou did not answer; she did not think that Toinette could be very much amused during the long weary days.

“I wish I could work,” continued the little girl, “but I cannot because of my poor hands; and she held out the poor little thin fingers which were all bent and twisted.

Chouchou lowered her eyes so as not to see

them ; her heart was very full of pity for this good patient little girl, who made so light of her troubles, and she certainly would have begun to cry, only she was afraid of hurting Toinette's feelings,—it was almost the first time in all her little life that she had ever checked those ever-ready tears of hers ; she stood quite silent and very thoughtful by her mother's side, whilst Madame Despaigne talked to Toinette, and promised to bring her some books to read, for she said she could read just a very little.

“ And now good-bye, Toinette ; come along, Chouchou, we must be getting home.”

Chouchou took Victoria in her arms, and laid her on the sick child's lap. “ There,” she said, blushing, “ play with her until the carrier takes her away,” and then she ran after her mother, without waiting to hear the thanks of the two children.

She felt she must get away, she could no longer restrain her tears,—they were beginning to fall fast before she got to the bottom of the staircase.

Madame Despaigne took her hand and to her very lovingly,—she knew why that Chouchou was crying,—they were rowful tears, with a great deal of self-interest in them.

“Are you not sorry, my darling,” said she, “that you have wasted so many tears on a bird or a cat, or even a fly or a spider, some little thing that has vexed you? There are so many real sorrows in the world which we ought to pity and to help? I am not ashamed of being such a coward on account of little troubles, whilst Toinette is so brave and her great one?”

Chouchou could not speak, she only moved closer to her mother’s side and stroked her.

“And now what are you going to do, my child? your tears will not do Toinette any good. Wipe them away, and think whether there is no way in which you can give that poor girl some pleasure, and brighten her life. I am sure you will have thought of so many things before we get home.”

Chouchou rubbed her eyes very hard, but still she did not speak.

“Mother,” she said, when they reached their own door, “I think I have thought of something.”

Her mother kissed her.

“I was quite sure you would, darling ; but it is very late, go and get ready for dinner, and tell me all about it afterwards.”





CHAPTER XV.

WHAT CHOUCHOU FOUND FOR TOINETTE.

CHOUCHOU was unusually silent during the whole of dinner, and Roland and George, thinking that she was still fretting over "that wretched Victoria," did not tease her. Truth to tell, they were getting rather tired of her tears, and thought it wise not to say anything which might cause an "inundation."

When the meal was over, Chouchou followed *her mother* to her own room.

"Mother," she said, sadly, "I thought I had found something,—but it won't do."

"What is it, my child?"

"Toinette is very fond of dolls, and I thought I would give her one of mine,—but I cannot—"

"Why can you not?"

"Because, mother, the other day when Fidelia brought them to me, I called them 'horrid old dolls,' and I could not give a 'horrid old doll' to Toinette; poor Toinette! So I don't know what to do—unless—unless—I might give her Victoria when she comes back from Lille."

Madame Despaigne turned her head away, —it was her turn to feel inclined to cry now,—she was so glad, so thankful that Chouchou had thought of this, for she knew that in all the world there could be no greater sacrifice than this for her little girl.

"My darling," she said, "are Frisina and Blondina really horrid dolls? it is not so many days, I think, since you were quite satisfied with them."

Chouchou hung her head. "I had not seen Victoria then, mother."

"Well, I think Victoria too smart a young lady for poor Toinette; she would not understand how to dress her, she would not know what all the pretty things were meant for. I am quite sure that she would be much better pleased with either Frisina or Blondina."

"I will fetch them at once, mother, and we will go to Toinette's house."

"Not to-day, my child; to-morrow, if I have time, we will go there. You must choose which doll you will like best to give her, and find some nice clothes for it. And now go into the garden, and try to be very pleasant to the boys."

Chouchou ran off, happier than she had been ever since the night of the storm, and there she found Roland and George amusing themselves by making Tom carry Blancminet on his back, and struggling to keep Blancminet quiet in his novel position. Of course Chouchou laughed very much over this, and the

boys, seeing that she was in a good temper, played with her for the rest of the afternoon.

She told them of her visit to Toinette, and of the doll she was going to take her the next day.

"We must do something for the poor little girl also," shouted both Roland and George.

"I will make a bed for the doll," said George.

"And I a table and a chair," said Roland.

"Get up early to-morrow, Chouchou, and you will see what we have done."

The first thing the next morning Chouchou decided that Frisina would be the most suitable doll for Toinette,—she had bright blue eyes, and evidently the poor little girl liked blue eyes,—then she found some clothes for Frisina to take to her new home. They were not quite clean, that was the worst of it, but Fidelia good-naturedly said that she would wash them, and Chouchou helped her as best she could, and ironed some of the things herself with her own little iron.

All this time Roland and George were trying to make the furniture for the doll, but the tools in the tool-house were rather large and clumsy for such a purpose, and they took their work, which certainly was not a success, to Madame Despaigne.

She could not help laughing over it, but she told them that Toinette already had a little table upon which she arranged her toys, and that a bed and a chair would be quite enough for Frisina's needs, and that at the shop round the corner they would find what they wanted.

"All right," they said, "we each have a franc, we were going to buy some chocolate, but we would rather buy something for the poor girl," and off they ran as happy as kings.

The bed was just the size for Frisina, and Madame Despaigne made a little mattress, and a pillow, and a quilt for it, and Chouchou hemmed some rose-coloured curtains, which made it look very smart, and she made a little cushion for the chair, which she stuffed with some feathers which Fidelia gave her, and she said that

with such furniture Frisina must be comfortable even in Toinette's poor house.

Meantime the boys, although they were satisfied with their purchases, were determined to make something for the poor little girl.

They shut themselves up in their room, after having roamed all over the house, and at last made an inroad into the kitchen, during Fidelia's absence upstairs.

When she returned, she declared that those boys would end by driving her mad,—they had been making some dreadful mess in one of her saucepans, a cup was missing, and she had found the flour in the oven,—Madame Despaigne's scissors also had disappeared—her very best embroidery scissors too.

When the preparations for Frisina's removal were all made, Chouchou went up stairs to put on her hat, and knocked at the boys' door to ask them if they wished to come to see Toinette.

"Wait five minutes, please, Chouchou,—we shall be quite ready then—"

"What are you doing?"

The boys did not answer, and Chouchou had to go down stairs, and wonder what it could all mean.

A little more than five minutes, and there was evidently great excitement on the staircase.

"Take care, it's not dry," said George.

"It will dry on the road," answered Roland. "we will keep it turned to the wind."

"All right; and we must tell Toinette not to shut it to-day."

"What is not dry, mother?" asked Chouchou.

But Madame Despaigne was as much in ignorance as her little girl.

Another minute and the boys were in the dining-room.

They certainly had not been idle,—they had collected all the pictures they could find in the house, they had cut them out and pasted them into the pages of an old album.

It was to do this that they had taken Madame



Desspaigne's scissors, and that they had used
Fidelia's saucepan and flour for making paste.

The pictures were not yet dry, but anyhow
they were very amusing, and there was a great
varietty of them.

There were soldiers, and sailors, and princes,
and princesses, and fine gentlemen, and ladies,
and children, and animals of all kinds, all mixed
up in a very comical fashion.

Chouchou was delighted with it, and only
wished she might be allowed to look at it for
an hour, but the boys were ready and impa-
tient to start.

When Toinette saw her friends come into the
room, she exclaimed, "The doll is gone, the
carrier took her away this morning, and he has
promised to bring her back next week."

"Thank you, Toinette," answered Chouchou,
"and here is a doll for you, since you like dolls ;
her name is Frisina, but you can call her any-
thing you like, and here is her bed which my
brother is bringing, and that is Roland, my
cousin, with her chair, and they have made you

a beautiful book of pictures, Toinette, only you must let them dry a little."

Toinette opened her eyes very wide indeed, and did not quite understand what it all meant : how could she believe that this little lady whom she had only seen the day before, could mean that this beautiful doll, and the bed, and the chair, and the picture book were all for her—for her very own ?

When at last it dawned upon her, that wonderful though it was, it was the truth, she could find no words in which to express her thanks, and instead of taking the doll and the other things into her hands, she took Chouchou's little soft white hand into her poor bent fingers, and kissed it, and began to cry.

Chouchou was dreadfully distressed.

"Mother," she said, "Toinette is not pleased, she is crying."

"Yes, my darling, she is pleased," answered Madame Despaigne, stroking poor Toinette's hair, "she is crying for joy, she will laugh very soon."

Little Joseph, who was not as sensitive as his sister, was already laughing merrily over the pictures which George was showing him, giving him strict orders to turn over the leaves very gently, so that he might not tear them.

And when Toinette had recovered herself a little, she thanked the children from her heart for all their kindness, and said she never could be dull any more with such beautiful toys to play with.





CHAPTER XVI.

THE FAIR.

IN the beginning of September there was great bustle and excitement in a large square at Dunkirk, there were tents made of wood, and tents made of canvas, and it was very easy to know what was going to happen—there was going to be the great fair held, which was held every year.

Chouchou had not been to the fair the year before, because she was away from home, nor

the year before that, because she was ill, and before that of course she was too little to be taken into such a crowd, so she was in a great state of delight, when the very first day it was opened, her mother said she would take all three children to the fair.

Oh! what wonders there were to see when they got there, what wonderful toy shops and sweet shops, and shops of all kinds! Chouchou stood before them so fascinated, that it seemed as though she was never going to move.

"Come along," said Roland, "come and look at the acrobat who is holding a child in each hand."

But Chouchou hid her eyes and declared that the children would fall and be killed, and she ran away into the midst of the crowd.

"What is the matter, Chouchou?" said Roland, following her.

"Nothing, only I want to get away from that wicked man, that acrobat."

"Why do you call the poor man wicked? I am sure he looks very kind."

"He has stolen those poor little children, I am quite sure, acrobats always steal children, and they beat them to teach them to jump."

"Nonsense, Chouchou, they are his own children, and he is very kind to them, I saw him kissing them just now."

"No," she said, "I know they are stolen," and she went and put her hand into her mother's, and would not speak to Roland any more. Later in the day however, she consented to mount one of the wooden horses in the merry-go-round ; but when she tried to pierce one of the rings which were held at equal distances before the horses, with the little lance she carried in her hand, she failed to do it, her little arms were not long enough to reach the rings. George and Roland of course succeeded in piercing all the rings they rode at, and Chouchou was very much put out that she could not do what they did, and she got off her horse pouting and looking anything but pleased, such a different looking little girl from the one who, only a few days before had stood at Toinette's side, and given

her the toys. But you see, faults long indulged in cannot be cured in a day.

"Don't you want to have another turn?" said her mother.

"No, I have had turns enough. I don't like wooden horses," she answered crossly.

"As you like," said Madame Despaigne, who saw at once what was the matter with her little girl, "George and Roland don't want to get off yet, so we will sit on this bench and look at them."

Chouchou sat by her mother's side, thinking herself very unhappy, and very badly used, and very soon the ever-ready tears were in her eyes.

She did not think of Toinette then, poor Toinette who would have been so glad even to look at the wooden horses.

There was a pretty little boy about the age of Chouchou who asked if he might have one more turn, and gave the master of the horses a halfpenny, with a bright little smile.

"I like it so much," he said cheerfully, "and

perhaps next year I may be able to take one the rings, do you think I shall ?”

“ You have not been able to get one yet ~~the~~— my little gentleman ?”

“ No, they are too high up.”

“ Wait a minute, you will manage it this time.”

The good-natured man went and lowered the rings, and the little boy pierced, and carried off three of them on the end of his lance, and he went and showed them to his friend, and thanked him very politely.

Chouchou had seen and heard all ! oh, if she had not refused to have another turn, she too might have carried off a ring—and the tears grew into sobs, which her mother did not appear to hear.

The merry-go-round came to a standstill—the boys jumped off their horses, and Chouchou entreated to be allowed to mount again, now that the rings were lowered.

“ No,” said her mother, “ you have changed your mind too late ; I have promised to take the boys to the circus, and the performance is

just going to begin. Come, wipe your eyes, you will see some pretty live horses, very much prettier than wooden ones."

Chouchou was very nearly saying that there was nothing in all the world that she liked as well as wooden horses, but Roland took her hand and began to tell her how the men at the circus jumped through paper hoops, and on to their horses on the other side, and she began to forget her grievances, and went merrily into Franconi's beautiful circus, quite prepared to enjoy herself.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE CIRCUS.

THE Circus was so brilliantly lighted that Chouchou's eyes were quite dazzled, and she had to close them for a minute or two—but she soon opened them again and began to look round her at the people who had already taken their seats, and at those who were coming in, at the clowns who were running backwards and forwards in a very comical fashion, and at the banners which floated from the large pole which reached from the ground to the roof.

Besides this she smiled, and did not seem in the least bit frightened; she sat on a large horse, and arranged her little skirt gracefully over her knees, and said in her clear childish voice, Hoop! hoop! to tell her steed that she wanted him to go on.

The horse of course understood her, and began to walk round the circus, and Chouchou clapped her hands more loudly than ever, and would not help calling out "Bravo" when Mademoiselle Colombine passed quite close to her.

At the second turn the horse went off into a trot, at the third into a gallop.

The man who had brought the little girl in, never took his eyes off her; he stood in the middle of the circus with a large whip in his hand, talking every now and then to the horse.

Then he went up to Mademoiselle Colombine, and held out his hand to her; of course she knew what that meant, she leant upon his hand, and in a second was standing upright on the saddle, then he released her, and went back

"What is coming next, mother?" said Chouchou.

But before Madame Despaigne could answer, one of the riders appeared with a pretty little girl dressed as a cupid sitting on his arm.

She had on a little pink vest, on which were sown two little wings, a scarf and a shoulder belt, and she held a tiny bow in her hands, and at her side was a quiver full of arrows, and she wore also a little blue skirt covered with silver spangles.

She smiled and bowed, and kissed her hand to the people, and the man who carried her introduced her thus :

"The wonderful performances of Mademoiselle Colombine, who is only four years old, and who has won the approbation of most of the crowned heads of Europe, in her representation of Cupid."

Chouchou almost thought she must shut her eyes, so as not to see Mademoiselle Colombine's wonderful performances; but she was such a pretty little girl it was impossible not to look at her.

Besides this she smiled, and did not seem in the least bit frightened; she sat on a large horse, and arranged her little skirt gracefully over her knees, and said in her clear childish voice, Hoop! hoop! to tell her steed that she wanted him to go on.

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Then he went up to Mademoiselle Colombine, and held out his hand to her; of course she knew what that meant, she leant upon his hand, and in a second was standing upright on the saddle, then he released her, and went back

to his place in the centre of the circus, whilst the spectators clapped and applauded with all their might.

Mademoiselle Colombinette stood upon both her little feet, and cantered round the ring, then she balanced herself on one foot, and took an arrow from the quiver and put it into her bow and pretended to shoot at somebody.

She looked so pretty and so graceful that the people got up from their seats to look at her, and some of them threw her some bonbons, and some little bunches of flowers, which fell into the sand at her feet.

The man with the whip picked them all up for her, still looking at her anxiously.

Then somebody in the back seats wishing to show his approbation of the "wonderful performance," threw a large orange at the poor little Cupid, which hit her horse right in the eye.

The frightened animal shied, and made for the centre of the ring.

The man with the whip turned very white





1000

1000

1000

and rushed towards Mademoiselle Colombinette, but he was too late, the poor little girl was lying on the sand, and a little stream of blood flowed from the golden hair.

Colombinette's head had struck against the pole which supported the roof of the circus.

The man lifted the little one in his arms, and carried her away as quickly as he could.

Chouchou had watched it all, and when the little fainting form was no longer to be seen, she turned to her mother and hid her face on her shoulder and said sobbing,

"Oh, mother, mother, she is killed."

Every one else said the same words.

"She is killed," resounded on all sides, and the clowns were appealed to, to know if it was really so, or whether there was any chance of poor little Mademoiselle Colombinette's life being saved.

Then Chouchou lifted up her head, and looked earnestly into her mother's face.

"Let us go and see her, mother," she said ;
"if she is not quite dead, perhaps that wicked

man would let you give her back to her father and mother. Come at once, do come,—you can make her well,—you always know how to make people well when they are ill.”

Madame Despaigne was very much astonished ; it was generally Chouchou’s way to think only of the grief it was to herself when any one else was hurt, and now she was actually wanting to go to the assistance of the wounded child. She felt very thankful that her darling was learning to think more of others ; and besides this she was really anxious to prove to Chouchou that all little children who perform at circuses were not stolen.

So she got up quietly and took her little girl’s hand, and went to a tent where the circus people who were not performing were waiting their turn to go into the ring ; Monsieur Despaigne, and Roland, and George followed them there.

They got to the tent just at the same time as their own doctor, who had been at the circus that evening with his children, and came to

See what he could do for Mademoiselle Colom-binette.

The poor little child was lying on the lap of a young woman, who was crying, and kissing her, and calling her by every endearing name she could think of.

"My darling! my treasure! my sweet little Jeanneton!" she said, trying to staunch the blood which flowed from under the shining curls.

The man with the whip (he had no whip in his hand now, poor fellow,) was kneeling at the child's side, looking at her with such a sad sorrowful face.

Chouchou was very much astonished to see that the young woman who held "her sweet little Jeanneton" in her arms so lovingly, was dressed in a rose-coloured vest, and a velvet body, and a silk skirt all spangled with gold, "Just like the ladies who jumped through the hoops just now," she said to herself.

The doctor went up to the child, and looked at her very kindly.

The poor young woman started and turned very pale.

"It is impossible," she said, "I cannot come, don't you know that my little one has been hurt, Monsieur Finot?"

"I thought it was nothing; you see we cannot disappoint the spectators by altering the programme. Come, see if you can't manage it, it will not take long."

"Sir," said the doctor, "do have some pity for this poor woman, she is trembling, and can hardly stand, she will never be able to go through her performance,—she is sure to meet with some accident."

"No, there is no fear of that,—she must have something given her to quiet her nerves, and then she will be all right. Of course, if the child had been killed, I should have said nothing about her appearing to-night, but the little one is better, and I cannot disappoint the public. I am not a hard man, but if the people are not pleased, they will not come again, and I shall lose money, and not be able to pay my

Noisy place ; could you not go to some other lodging for a few days ?”

Chouchou caught hold of her mother’s hand.

“Mother, dear, dear mother, please take Colombinette home with us ; let her mother come too, if she is really and truly her mother, and the child has not been stolen. You will, won’t you, to please me ?”

Madame Despaigne smiled and looked pleased, and then she went up to the poor father and mother, and offered them a large quiet room in her own house, where they could both come and take care of their child.

“Oh, how good you are, madame,” answered the young woman ; “we are only too thankful, are we not, Jean ?—I cannot say what I wish, I feel so bewildered,—you have children of your own, madame, you can understand it all. I will carry Jeanneton to your house, if I may—”

“We are waiting for the celebrated Zephyrine,” said a man’s voice at the door of the tent.



CHAPTER XVIII.

REAL SORROW COMES TO CHOUCOU.

POOR little Mademoiselle Colombinette looked very pale, but very comfortable when her mother returned from the circus an hour afterwards, after having gone through her performance very creditably. No one could see what a heavy heart was beating under the span-gled dress, no one noticed the tears that were in "the celebrated Zéphyrine's" eyes as she jumped through the paper hoops, and did all that was expected of her, and when her little Jeanneton

smiled upon her so prettily, and told her that she was quite well now, and oh, so happy and comfortable, the poor young mother cried for joy, and kissed Madame Despaigne's hands, and prayed that God would reward her for her goodness.

The three days that followed Mademoiselle Colombine's accident were very happy days for Chouchou.

On the second day Victoria arrived from Lille beautiful as ever, and of course she was taken up stairs to amuse the little invalid.

In fact there was nothing that Chouchou would not have done for the "dear little one," as she called her.

She considered herself quite head nurse, insisted upon giving Jeanneton her medicine, and helped Fidelia to cook the dainty little dishes which were sent up to the child's room, and she would sit by her side for hours, and tell her stories of Tom, and of Blancminet, and of the little mother birds which fed their young ones so carefully.

She had begun to understand that all children who ride at a circus, or are acrobats at a fair, are not stolen children, but have fathers and mothers who love them with all their hearts; but still she was very glad when she heard that Jeanneton's parents were very anxious to leave their present life, if they could only hear of something to do.

"But we must live," said the young mother, with tears in her eyes, "and we were both brought up to the circus, and are not fit for anything else."

Monsieur Despaigne however found that "the man with the whip" could write a very good hand, and was very quick at figures, and he promised to think of him, if he heard of any one who wanted a clerk.

Of course no one wanted a clerk at that particular time, and Chouchou was inclined to be very angry with her father on this account, and she cried very much on the day when Made-moiselle Colombinette went back with her father and mother to the Golden Fish, and still more

on the day when they all came to say good-bye to the friends who had been so kind to them, and Colombinette brought a pretty little bow and arrows as a present for Chouchou, and told her the circus was going to Lille.

Of course, although our little heroine was learning a lesson, the lesson took some time to learn, as lessons always do, and sometimes a good deal of trouble has to be borne before it is well learnt, and the grown up person, or the little child who has to bear the trouble, can look back at all the sorrow he or she had to pass through, and thank God for teaching him, in His own loving way.

A few days after the circus left Dunkirk, another trouble came to poor Chouchou, the very greatest, she said, that had ever come to her in her life ; Louis Darbaut, the sailor, arrived at Dunkirk just six weeks after the day he left it.

He would not stay with the captain who had been so cruel as to try to drown his dear old dog Tom, so he got away from the ship as soon

as he could, and now he had come to thank the kind little lady who had written him such a pretty letter, and to take away Tom, and to hope that he had not given a great deal of trouble.

Trouble ! Chouchou was indignant that any one should think it possible that Tom could do anything but what was right ! She had even forgotten his first day's bad behaviour to Blancminet.

She thought that Louis Darbaut had gone away for a very long time, and here he was again, before the end of the holidays ; he was a wicked bad cruel man to take Tom away from her. Of course Louis Darbaut was very sorry, but he could not give up his faithful Tom, who had saved his life no less than three times.

Chouchou's temper after Tom went away, was about the worst in which she had ever indulged. Her mother, who really felt sorry for her distress, told her to put on her hat, and come with her to see Toinette, but of course she declared she did not care about the poor little sick

girl, and did not want to see her, she "only wanted Tom, and that cruel sailor had taken him away."

Her father was so angry with her when he came in rather earlier than usual in the afternoon, that he ordered Fidelia to put her to bed, for she really tired every one with her bad temper, and her naughty ways.

Chouchou knew that when her father said a thing he meant it, so she dared not resist, but allowed Fidelia to undress her, and then she rolled herself into a little ball, and put the counterpane over her head, and cried over every one's unkindness, and said to herself that she never could be happy again now that Tom was gone! her dear, dear, darling Tom.

At last she fell asleep. When she awoke in the morning, the sun was shining brightly into her room, it never shone so brightly before nine o'clock—she was sure it must be very late, and no one had been near her, neither her mother nor Fidelia, and yet she thought it could not be so late, for the house was so quiet; Fidelia was

not bustling about, and the boys certainly were not in the garden, she would have heard their voices under her window, if they had been there, perhaps they had gone for a walk, and would not take her with them. No one cared for her, no one loved her, except Tom, and his cruel master had taken him far away.

The chimes rang out one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine ! Yes, it really was nine o'clock ! and she was left all alone, and she was so hungry.

For one minute Chouchou thought she would stay in her little bed and die of hunger, so as to punish them all for their neglect and unkindness ; but she soon thought better of it, and she got up and dressed herself as best she could, and went down stairs to see if she could get some breakfast. On her way she met Fidelia carrying a cup in her hand.

“ Oh, my poor child, here you are,” she said, “ I had forgotten all about you, or rather, I have not had time to think of you,—your coffee and milk are on the stove, and the bread and the

Sugar are on the table ; you can help yourself, can you not ? I must go to your mother at once."

Chouchou could not understand what it all meant, and began asking questions, but Fidelia did not heed her, but hurried on to Madame Despaigne's room, and locked the door after her.

The little girl took her breakfast in the kitchen all alone. The house seemed so strange, not a sound in it, such a stillness and a hush everywhere,—even Blancminet and Nero sat before the fire, although it was such a warm day—and seemed very sad.

"They are fretting after Tom," thought Chouchou, and she was just beginning to cry, when Roland and George came in very quietly, with Fidelia behind them.

"How is she?" asked George, and his voice trembled, Chouchou thought he was going to cry.

"Just the same,—there is no change. Will you go to the butcher's and the greengrocer's for me, Master George?—I have written down

what I want on this piece of paper ; it will be such a help to me if you will go."

"Yes, we will both go," answered Roland, and his voice too was very low and sad.

Roland and George took up their caps, and then Chouchou flew to them—

"What is it ?" she said, "is mother ill ? she was quite well yesterday."

"No, she was not, she felt ill all day ; I saw her put her hand to her head very often, and she sat quite still, and was not able to work ; after you had gone to bed she said she must go up stairs, and this morning at five o'clock father sent me to fetch Dr. Legris."

"Does he say she will die ?"

"No, he did not say anything ; only he passed his fingers through his hair, as he always does when he is anxious, and father looked very grave after he went away ; and he is coming again almost directly. Will you come with us to the butcher's and the fruiterer's, Chouchou ? You must not make a noise here."

Chouchou would not go out, she did not

Wish to, she said, but she promised not to make a noise; and as soon as the boys were off, she crept up stairs very quietly, and opened the door of her mother's room,—Fidelia had forgotten to lock it this time.

Her father saw her, and went up to her as she stood there looking very pale and frightened; he kissed her, and told her to "go away, and to be a very good girl, because her poor mother was very, very ill."

Chouchou obeyed, poor little maid, and went into her own little room, and need it be told that she cried very bitterly?—she had reason to cry now; but she did not make a noise, she hid her face in her pocket-handkerchief, and sobbed very quietly; and then she knelt down by the side of her bed and asked God to make her dear mother better. And after a time she remembered that that same dear mother had told her that crying did not help people to help others, so she wiped her eyes and went bravely down stairs, and sat down in the kitchen to wait for Fidelia.

“What are you doing, my poor little one? go out into the garden, and play with Nero and Blancminet.”

“No, I don’t want to play, Fidelia, I want to be useful,—to do something that mother would like. You are very busy, can I help you?”

Fidelia took the child into her arms, and kissed her.

“Good little woman,” she said, “that is quite right; I always said your heart was in the right place, in spite of your little tempers. Will you go and feed the fowls for me? it is long past their hour, poor things, and I have not had time to think of them, and you can take the crusts of bread and soak them in water, and get their meal ready for to-morrow.”

“Oh, yes; and after that I can cook the dinner, can I not?”

“No, my dear little one, you are too little to do that; Mother Lisa is coming in to help me directly; attend to the fowls’ cookery, that is quite enough for you.”



Chouchou did all that she was told to do ; Cocotte's chickens had grown, and were such pretty little things, but the little girl did not stop to play with them that morning ; as soon as she had given them their food she ran back to the kitchen to see what else she could do, and she made herself very useful in showing Mother Lisa where Fidelia kept all the things, so Fidelia was able to stay in Madame Despaigne's room quite comfortably, and Monsieur Despaigne came down to the children's dinner.

All through that long sad morning Chouchou had not given a thought to Tom, except just once for a minute when she passed his empty kennel ; then she blushed, and thought how naughty and foolish she had been,—perhaps her naughtiness had made her dear mother worse, for George said she had been ill all day ; and yet how patient and gentle she had been with her wayward little girl.

The dinner was very quickly eaten, no one spoke, and before it was quite over the doctor came, and Monsieur Despaigne went up stairs

with him, and as soon as he was gone, he told the boys to fetch a nurse, whose address Legris had given him.

“Is aunt very ill?” asked Roland.

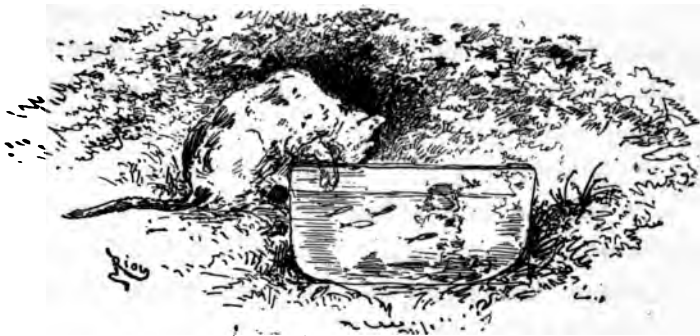
“Yes, my boy, indeed she is.”

“Father, are you anxious about her?” George, not trying to hide his tears, generally did.

Monsieur Despaigne did not answer; he put his hand on George’s curly head, and

“Take great care of your little sister,” and he went up stairs to the sick-room.





CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH TEARS ARE CHANGED INTO SMILES.

MADAME Despaigne was ill a very long time, so long that the holidays were quite at an end before she was pronounced out of danger, but Roland was still at Dunkirk when that happy day came.

There was an epidemic of measles in Paris, and none of the schools or colleges were to be opened until the end of October.

The boy's mother had written and said that

she thought Roland had better come home ; but Monsieur Despaigne said that he was so useful and so thoughtful, and such a pleasant companion for poor George, that he asked as a special favour that he might be allowed to stay.

When Chouchou was first taken to see her mother, she hardly knew her, she was so pale, and so thin, and so altered, her eyes were so hollow, and her lips so white.

But her voice, although it was very weak, was her own voice, as she said : " How glad I am to see my dear little girl again."

Chouchou was very nearly going to cry, but she had been told that she must be very quiet, and not trouble her mother, so she bit her lips very hard, and so sent back the rising tears, and she sat down upon a little footstool, and looked at her mother and smiled, and thought herself the happiest little girl in all the world.

She was always anxious now to find out what she could do to help everybody, her mother above all.

If, when Chouchou was sitting in the sick-room Madame Despaigne stretched out her hand for her pocket-handkerchief, Chouchou stood on tiptoe and gave it her ; if she shut her eyes, because there was a little too much light, Chouchou drew down the blinds ; she ran messages for the nurse, and was always quiet and gentle, and good-tempered.

Her mother was very happy when she saw all this. "How good my darling has grown during my illness."

You see Chouchou had had a great deal of time for thought during those sad days. Sometimes she was sent out of the house to spend the afternoon with Clara, and some of her little companions, but she did not like this at all, especially after she had heard George say to Roland, "I always run back as fast as I can when I have been sent out on an errand, I am so afraid lest mother should die without wishing me good-bye."

Chouchou could not bear to be out of the house after this, and she made herself so useful

that at last Fidelia said she really could not spare her.

One day she scalded her hand with some hot water, and another day she let a log fall on her foot, and another she pricked her fingers in picking some roses to send up to her mother's room, and she did not cry once when these accidents happened.

She did not even shed a single tear when Blancminet, taking advantage of the wire cover not being put on the aquarium, after the water had been changed, ate up six of the prettiest fishes for his dinner.

Roland, charmed with her good temper, instantly ran off and found Charles returning from fishing, and got him to give him some much prettier fish than those which Blancminet had devoured.

Blancminet was of course well scolded and even beaten for his greediness, and for his naughtiness in being so unkind to Chouchou, who was now such a good little girl.

The day before Roland was to go back to

Paris, Madame Despaigne said that she felt quite well enough to give the children a little treat.

She sent Fidelia to the shops, and package after package arrived, carefully tied up in grey paper, and the children were forbidden to look into them, and Monsieur and Madame Despaigne locked themselves in the drawing-room with an air of great mystery.

The boys had their secret also; they shut themselves in the tool-house, and strictly ordered Fidelia not to think of bringing a candle there, which of course she was not at all likely to do, as it was broad daylight. Fidelia also closed the kitchen door, and said that no one was to attempt to come in under pain of her severe displeasure.

The evening came at last, when all these mysterious preparations must come to light.

First of all, Paul, and Robert, and Clara, and a number of other children with their parents arrived.

Then there was a great feast in the dining-

room—Fidelia had made cakes larger and better than any cakes she had ever made before.

After this they were all invited out into the garden, and Roland put a chair for his aunt at the top of the steps, and Chouchou got a warm shawl to wrap round her mother; Roland went to join George at the bottom of the garden; then a little light appeared, then a rocket went up to the sky.

“Fireworks, fireworks!” shouted the children, clapping their hands.

And fireworks they certainly were—very grand ones—crackers and rockets, and Catherine-wheels, and Roman candles, and showers of gold and silver, all most beautiful to look at.

There were screams and shouts of delight from old and young.

“Attention! here comes the last and best,” cried George, “go on, Roland.”

Roland was seen carrying the broom-stick to which was attached a long taper, which was the boys’ way of lighting their fireworks. Bit by bit, out came a brilliant crown, within which in





letters of fire, the spectators could read the words *Vive Lucie!* long live Lucie!

Lucie was Madame Despaigne's name, and every one cried "Vive Lucie" at the very pitch of their voices; and Chouchou, biting her lips, because she would not let the tears of joy and thankfulness come into her eyes, said in a gentle little voice, "Long live mother."

When the fireworks were over the mysterious parcels were brought to the front, there were presents for every one, no one had been forgotten. Chouchou had a pretty little desk filled with paper, and she said her first letter should be to Louis Darbaut, to ask him to let her know how Tom was.

The pleasant evening came to an end rather early, as some of the elders were afraid of tiring Madame Despaigne.

Monsieur Despaigne and the boys walked home with some of the guests, and when they returned they found Chouchou sitting on her mother's knee, and both mother and daughter looking very happy.

"What are you two doing?" said Monsieur Despaigne laughing.

"Well, we are telling each other how much we love each other," answered Madame Despaigne, "and besides that, it appears that my little girl was so afraid of losing me that she began to think she had been a very foolish little girl to give way to such grief over small things, in fact she says she is rather ashamed of herself, and she means never to cry again unless it is for some real sorrow, and then only in moderation ; is it not so, my Chouchou?"

For answer, Chouchou only hid her face on her mother's shoulder ; but she was not crying this time, only she felt just a little bit shy.

"Well, I really don't think I have seen any tears for a long time," said her father.

"No, she never cries now," said George, "she is always good-tempered."

"She has grown such a good girl, that she must be treated quite like a young lady," said Roland, "I shall not dare to call her Chouchou any more."

"Oh please, Roland," said Chouchou, "please call me that; I like it better than any other name; I shall think that you don't love me any more, if you call me anything else."

"Nonsense," answered Roland; "if all those who love you call you Chouchou, you will be everybody's Chouchou,—for every one must love you now."

"Bravo, Roland! Long live everybody's Chouchou!" shouted George, throwing his cap into the air.

Many years have passed since that day, and Chouchou is really almost a grown-up young lady; of course, strangers call her Catherine, but at home, and by all those who knew and loved her as a little girl, she is called Chouchou still; and Roland, who is an officer in the French army, and George, who is a rising young engineer, think their Chouchou the best and prettiest girl in Dunkirk,—indeed in all the world.

And there are two others who knew her in those days when the tears were so often in her eyes, who always to themselves, if not in public, call her their own Mademoiselle Chouchou.

One is Toinette, who sits in the old chair still, and whose poor fingers are still all cramped and twisted, and her legs still powerless to walk. She is happy and contented now; as she was when she was a little girl, she looks out of the window upon the sky, and the trees, and the flowers, and even, perhaps, at the cats upon the roofs of the houses; and the room she sits in is more comfortable than it was, there are bright pictures upon the walls now, and there are flowers in the window sill,—all presents from Chouchou. Toinette is still very much alone; her mother goes out to her daily work, and little Joseph has grown into a smart young sailor, and has been half round the world; but the girl is never lonely; she still thinks of God and the Angels, and the brightest days in her suffering life are those when her own Mademoiselle Chouchou comes to see her, and

sits with her for an hour or more, and reads to her, and sings to her, and is always so bright, and kind, and loving.

There is another girl, a little girl still, of some twelve years old,—so different from poor Toinette, so active and graceful, with such pretty bright golden hair,—who loves Mademoiselle Chouchou with all her heart. Her father is Monsieur Despaigne's clerk, and the girl's name is Jeanneton, but Chouchou still calls her "Mademoiselle Colombinette."



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